NINTENDO POWER

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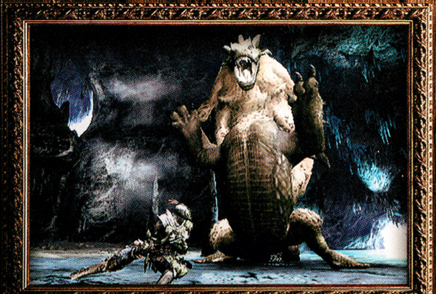

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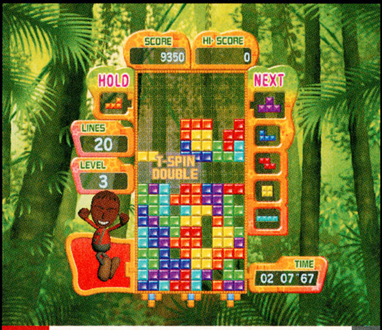

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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
N64 = NINTENDO 64
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWARE

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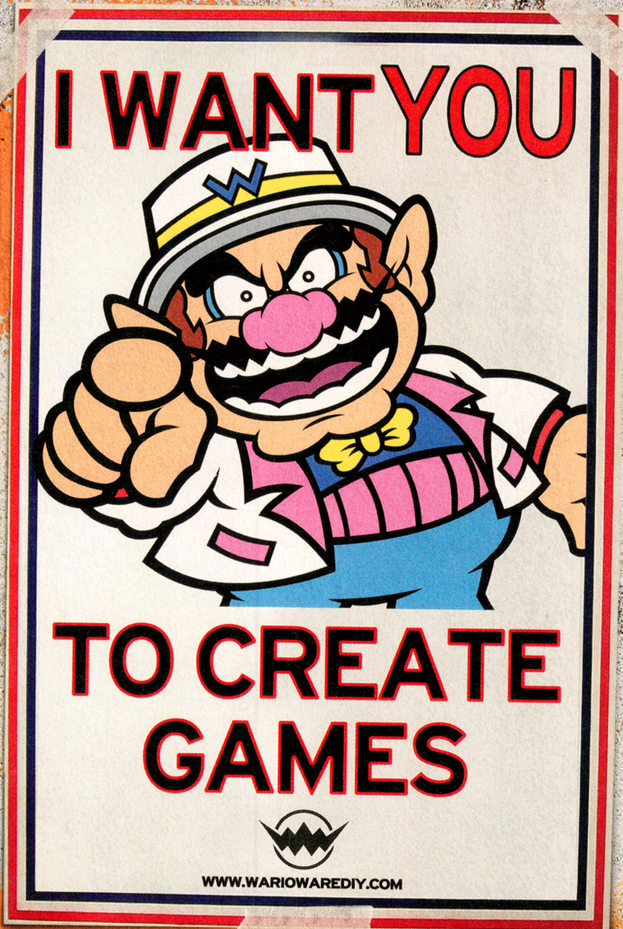

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Pulse

It's Going to be a Hot Summer!

Chris Slate

Since last issue, Nintendo announced that its three biggest upcoming games (that we know of) will release within weeks of each other: Super Mario Galaxy launches on May 23, followed by Sin and Punishment: Star Successor on June 7 and Metroid: Other M on June 27. Not since the March/April 2008 combo of Super Smash Bros. Brawl and Mario Kart Wii have we seen this much Nintendo goodness so early in the year. But will such a hot summer mean an extra-cold winter? We wouldn't bet on it. Nintendo executives have hinted at new game unveilings at E3 in June, and it's possibile (though not confirmed) that the highly anticipated new Zelda game for Wii may make it out in time for the holiday season. Should we just go ahead and put 2010 down as the best year ever?

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

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Future

V253 **APRIL 2010**

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while riding Yoshi in circles around my desk. But first, this month's special letter request: what non-Mario games would it be fun or funny to see Yoshi put into, and how would you use him? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

Two Hyrules?!

In issue 250 you had a big story on The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks, and as I was reading through it I noticed that it said you were [spoiler alert] in a land called Hyrule that Link and Tetra found after Phantom Hourglass. But since Phantom Hourglass is a sequel to The Wind Waker, in which the king destroys Hyrule, how are they *back* in Hyrule? —**AIDAN**

Good question! Here's what happened: in The Wind Waker, Link finds Hyrule hidden beneath the sea. And then, at the end of Phantom Hourglass, Link and Tetra discover a new land. In honor of the original Hyrule, they give it the same name. So, think of the world in Spirit Tracks as "New" Hyrule. Hope that helps clear things up for you!

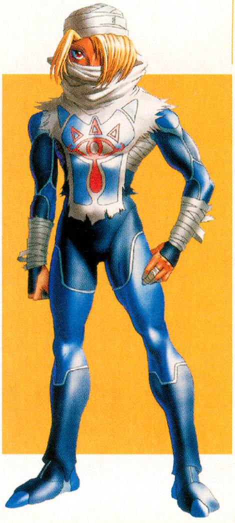
On the Topic of Tropics

Given Nintendo's habit of bringing back retro goodness (Kid Icarus will return, I know it!), why don't they release a new Star Tropics? The original's chapterlike structure would be perfect for episodic WiiWare downloads. It's gotta happen! —**TENGUTANUKI**

Bring Back Sheik!

Wouldn't it be great if Nintendo came up with a Zelda game based on Sheik? It could be set during the events of Ocarina of Time—when Zelda was hiding from Ganon and took the form of Sheik, she must have gone through a lot of stuff. Or, it could be a totally different story. I just think that a game about Sheik would be awesome. What do you think? —**OZIEL H.**

That sounds like a fantastic way to revisit Ocarina of Time, and who wouldn't love that? Here's another idea: what if Sheik showed up in a new Zelda game and it turned out that she wasn't the princess? Ooh, intrigue!



Being a big fan of the original Sonic games (that I still play on my Genesis), I was in shock and just about cried when I saw the preview of Sonic 4. I jumped for joy when I read that it would have all the things that made Sonic 2 great (that's still my favorite game). I can't wait for the new installment to this classic series of platformers.
—(NO NAME GIVEN)

DOWNLOAD

True Blue

No more gimmicks. No more friends. Sega's mascot gets back to basics with Sonic the Hedgehog 4.

Yoshi: Pal or Pawn?

I think Yoshi is being used as a servant. Think about it: the only time Mario has really saved the guy is in Super Mario World, but Yoshi has been saving *his* tush for years. And if you really think about it, Yoshi has defended Mario since the plumber was a baby in the Yoshi's Island games. Mario doesn't even treat him with respect, often sacrificing Yoshi after he's done using him. The worst part is that Luigi, the green moocher, the lowest of the low, also takes advantage of Yoshi. I think the bros. had better start giving piggyback rides, or Yoshi should hire Phoenix Wright and sue for physical and emotional distress.
—DEFENDER OF THE GREEN

Well, it all comes down to the player, doesn't it? You can avoid putting Yoshi in unnecessary danger and protect him all the way to the end of a level, or you can be like me and hop off the little green guy to reach a high platform, leaving him to plummet into a pit. Mario is innocent! The guilty one—plot twist!—was *you* all along! Live with your shame!

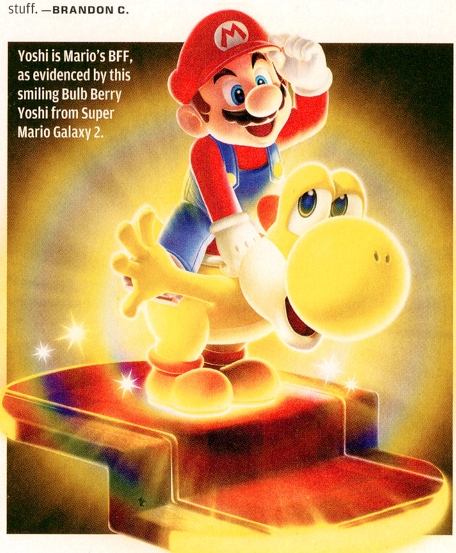
Life Lessons

I never knew how much people really liked Mario. I thought that once you got to high school, people only cared about war games and stuff like that. But then I went to bible camp and wore a Mario Kart T-shirt. I thought that I was gonna get ridiculed like I always do, but no, everybody was cheering for me that day. Of course, then I threw up later and everybody disliked me again. Whatever—I learned a valuable life lesson: never eat too much before you run around and stuff. **—BRANDON C.**

Always in Style

Blaster Master was too hard for me when I was young. As a full-grown adult I thought I would use Blaster Master Overdrive as some sort of late-bloomer rite of passage, but the first boss is quite the challenge. I love it! **—FLUX RIDER**

I am *loving* the return of all these retro games and franchises on WiiWare. Blaster Master Overdrive, Mega Man 9 and 10, Sonic 4, Contra, Gradius, and Castlevania ReBirth—what a great time for fans of the classics!



Yoshi is Mario's BFF, as evidenced by this smiling Bulb Berry Yoshi from Super Mario Galaxy 2.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

Using my superawesome powers, I was able to get inside my copy of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. It was awesome at first, but now I've got a medieval mob after me. Should I lose them in the Shadow Temple and potentially get eaten by a ReDead, or should I "accidentally" fry them in Death Mountain? And then, if I survive, should I file a lawsuit against Link? **—TRISTAN O.**

The Hoff says: Don't do either. I know a guy who knows a guy. Head to the ranch in the center of Hyrule Field and ask for Ingo. He'll get you in touch with the right person (Something-or-other-dorf) to make that mob go away permanently. Now, there's a chance that you'll end up getting cursed and you and your entire family will be turned into spiders, but really, who ever heard of something like *that* happening? Oh, and if you *really* want to avoid angry mobs, stop looking at all the ladies with your Lens of Truth already, will ya?

One of the most underrated games ever is Wario Land: Shake It!. I have always been a huge fan of 2-D platformers, and it was great to play a Nintendo-published one on a home console for the first time in years. I love the game's incredible graphics, music, and all of the extra missions to complete. I hope that we get another Wario Land on Wii that's as good as this one. —**KYLE M.**

What game do you think is underrated?

One game that comes to mind is Little King's Story for Wii. I never thought to try this title until I kept seeing it recommended in different issues of NP. From the moment I started playing it, I loved it. So consider this a "thank you!" for your reviews and your recommendations on those games that are must-haves. —**JUSTIN**

The Chibi-Robo! series is often overlooked. The hardcore crowd write it off as kiddie shovelware, but the games have a great old-school concept and a ton of charm. They are as addictive as Animal Crossing once you give them a chance, despite the games' goal of cleaning for Happy Points. I hope to see more Chibi-Robo! games down the road. —**(NO NAME GIVEN)**

The Minish Cap is one of the most underrated Zelda games. Maybe it would have been more popular if Ganon was in it, or if it was released when the Game Boy Advance was at its best, but it's fun, the music is great, and the game can be challenging (such as when searching for the library books). I was disappointed to find that Nintendo Power listed the game at number 8 in its ranking of every Zelda title. The Minish Cap is one of the best games of all time. If you haven't played it yet, I pity you. —**ZELDAFREAK44**

One of the most underrated games of all time is Pokémon Puzzle League for Nintendo 64. The game is amazing! Once you start playing it's almost impossible to stop! In my opinion, Pokémon Puzzle League is the best puzzle game on the N64, and is sadly underappreciated. —**(NO NAME GIVEN)**

When I think of a game being underrated, I immediately think of Zelda II. Sure, it's a platformer, and yes, it's one of the most difficult games in the NES library, but it's an amazing title. Zelda II introduced the series to NPCs and the magic system, and inspired a lot of games (like the NES Rambo, but let's not talk about that). Besides, who could forget "I am Error?" —**MATT "CABOOSE"**

I'm amazed at how underrated Super Mario Land for the Game Boy is. Nobody ever mentions it at all! Exploding Koopas? Awesome underground theme? Flying in a plane and riding in a submarine? Awesome! —**DEREK**

I think one of Nintendo's most underrated games is Kirby 64. Sure, it was short, but Miracle Matter is still one of the toughest boss fights I've ever scrapped my way through. Besides, it was the first game in the series to allow Kirby to combine different powers. What's more awesome than a tiny pink ball upchucking a flaming sword with which to dispatch his/her/its enemies? Not much. —**KELLEN M.**

I believe that The Conduit was extremely underrated. It is a great game with tons of cool set pieces and amazing online multiplayer. It's a must-play for any shooter fan. —**(NO NAME GIVEN)**

I'm leaning toward Shantae, but I'd have to say Draglade for the DS. I noticed this 7.5 gem while browsing your reviews, picked it up, and loved it. The multiplayer is great, especially over Wi-Fi, and the ability to customize your fighters is a fun addition. Unfortunately, every friend I have doesn't know what Draglade is. A sequel was released in Japan, but not here. We need more Draglade! —**MONJI**

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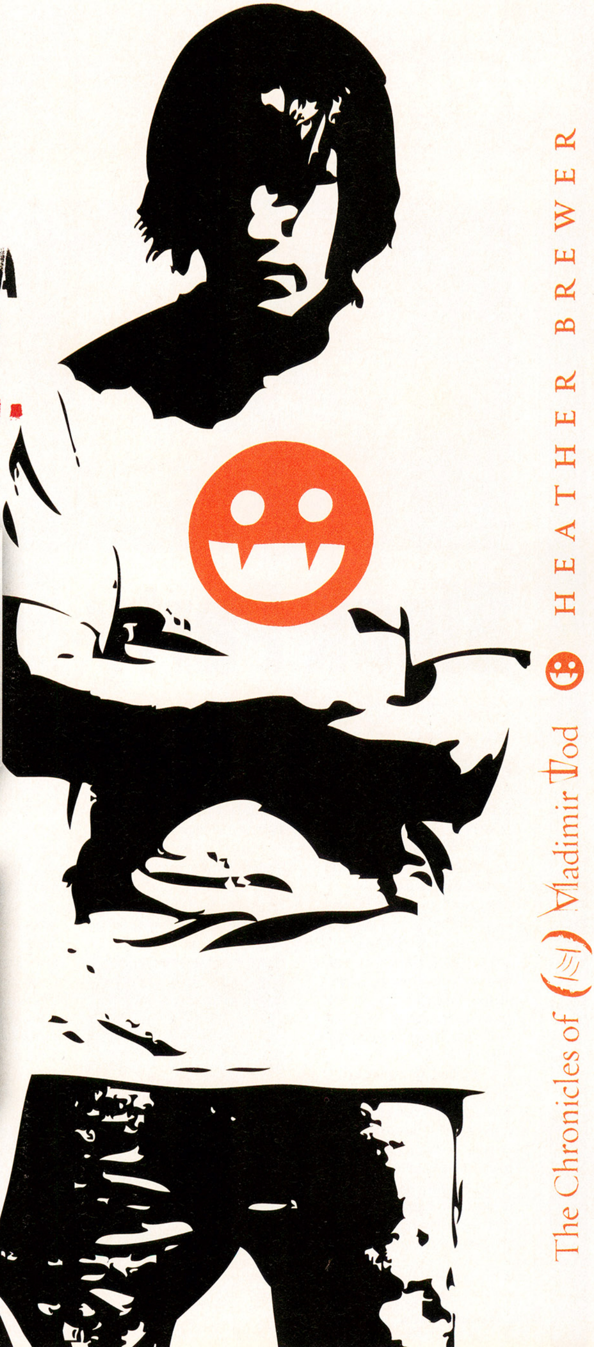
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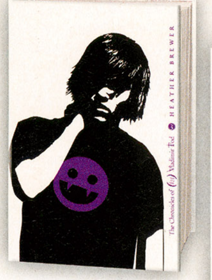
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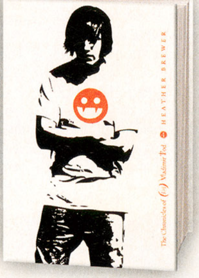
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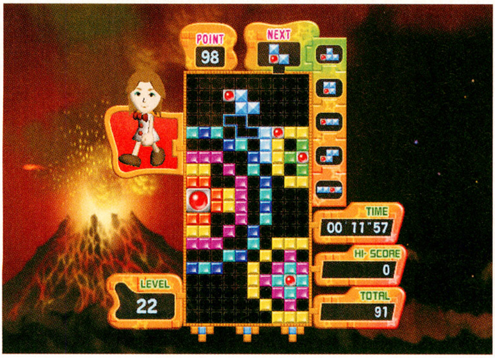
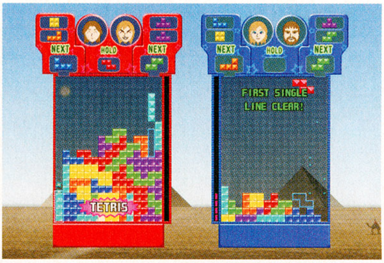
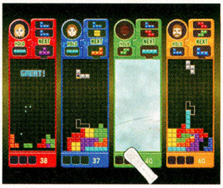
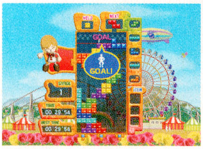




New Tetris modes include Bombliss [left] and four-player Co-op Vs. Co-op [above].





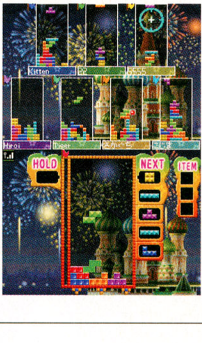
Block Party

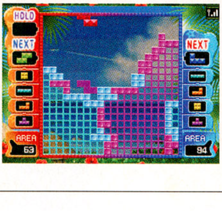
The classic puzzle game returns to Wii and DS with more modes and features than ever in the form of Tetris Party Deluxe.

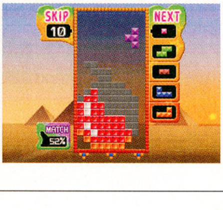
TETRIS PARTY, released for the WiiWare service in late 2008, had almost everything a fan of the classic Russian falling-block puzzler could possibly ask for: traditional Tetris action, tons of modes (including some designed exclusively for the Wii Balance Board accessory), cooperative and competitive multiplayer, online play, and more. But the folks at developer Hudson and publisher Tetris Online aren't through delivering the Tetris goodness—not by a long shot. This June you'll get to experience a thoroughly enhanced retail version of the game, titled Tetris Party Deluxe, on both the Wii console and the Nintendo DS handheld.

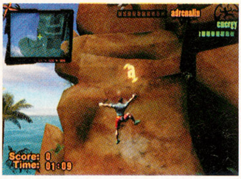
The Wii version of Tetris Party Deluxe features everything contained in the WiiWare version and then some. Brand-new modes include Sprint and Vs. Sprint (in which you attempt to eliminate 40 lines as fast as possible), Master (a superdifficult mode in which the blocks drop so fast you can barely see them fall), Bombliss (in which you clear lines using bombs and chain reactions), All-Clear Sprint (in which you attempt to eliminate every block on the play field 20 times in a row), and Co-op Vs. Co-op (a four-player battle between teams of two). Of course, that's all in addition to standard Marathon mode and Vs. CPU battles, and improved returning modes such as Field Climber (in which you use your blocks to help a small character climb to the top of the pile), Stage Racer (in which you maneuver a block through a tricky maze), Shadow (which has you use blocks to create a specific shape; now with custom puzzles), and Duel Spaces (in which two players compete to claim territory). Owners of Tetris Party Deluxe for Wii will even be able to compete online against owners of Tetris Party for WiiWare.

The DS version of Tetris Party Deluxe features almost all of the same modes as its Wii counterpart (the Balance Board modes are the obvious exceptions), adding up to more than 20 modes in all (including a DS-exclusive online variant of the aforementioned Duel Spaces mode). And the game truly lives up to its name on DS; up to eight players can compete via local wireless, and up to four can compete online. No matter which version you play, you'll experience what's sure to be one of the biggest "blockbusters" of the summer. **—CHRIS H.**









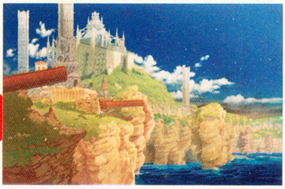
Taking It to the Top

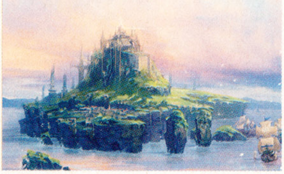
Reach new heights or drop like a rock in **Hard Grip: The Climbing Game** for Wii.

Rock climbing has been featured on WiiWare and as minigames in sports-compilation titles, but developer Human Soft is hard at work on the first full-fledged rock-climbing simulator for Wii—Hard Grip: The Climbing Game. By gesturing with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers (or two Wii Remotes, with or without the Wii MotionPlus accessory) and pressing the B and Z buttons to grip the cliff face, you'll climb hand-over-hand up eight mountains for a total of 40 courses. There are obstacles to overcome (such as bees and other animals) and power-ups and point icons to collect, plus you'll need to keep an eye on your stamina; you'll have to balance speed and safety if you want to outperform the other competitors in the Extreme Sports World Challenge. As of press time, Hard Grip does not have a publisher or a release date. —**CHRIS H.**

Back to Basics

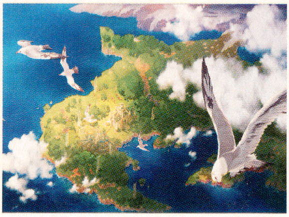
NEWS *from* JAPAN



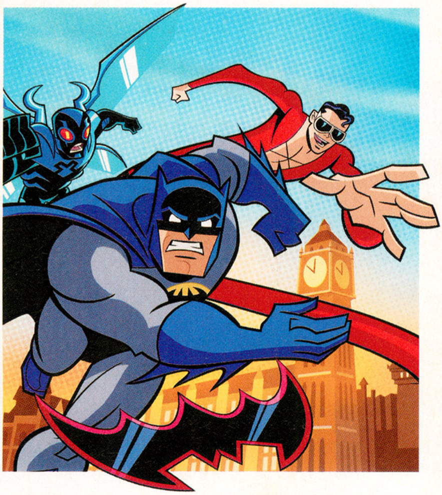


Hironobu Sakaguchi is returning to universal fantasy themes with **The Last Story**.

NINTENDO ISN'T QUITE ready to lift the curtain on Final Fantasy creator Hironobu Sakaguchi's Wii RPG, but the company did peel back a corner to offer a glimpse of the game's world, philosophy, and visual style. The Last Story is set on Luli Island, which sits at the entrance to the only bay of a large mountainous continent. As the key trading post of the empire beyond, Luli Island is a land of tremendous wealth and power. But it also stands as the empire's first land of defense, and knights, soldiers, and cannoneers stand ever ready to defend it with their lives. Nintendo has released several images of the island, which has distinct and striking colors evocative of cel-shaded games like The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker.



In a column on the game's official site, Sakaguchi speaks of creating a world that would be "bathed in sunlight" and approachable to all, and would have little influence from science fiction. The game's classic swords-and-sorcery setting sounds like a nice change of pace from the complicated mythologies and made-up jargon that have made many modern RPGs incomprehensible for casual fans. The Last Story is scheduled for a 2010 release in Japan; Nintendo has yet to announce a domestic release. —**CASEY L.**

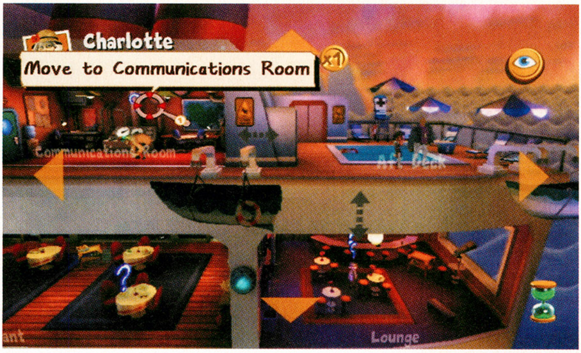


Taking Batman Forward

The platforming vets at WayForward are crafting the newest adventures of the Caped Crusader.

EVEN THOSE WHO disdain licensed games and colon-heavy titles may want to keep an eye on Batman: The Brave and the Bold: The Videogame, as Warner Bros. has entrusted the action-adventure specialists at WayForward (the studio behind Contra 4, Shantae, and A Boy and His Blob) with the task of adapting the animated series into games for both Wii and DS.

Two-player co-op is a natural fit, as Batman teams up with different DC Universe heroes to fight crime in each episode of the show. One player will take the role of the Caped Crusader, and the other player can use such iconic heroes as Robin, Green Lantern, and Blue Beetle. Players can also call in the help of additional heroes, like Aquaman or The Flash, when their special abilities are needed to solve puzzles or beat difficult foes. Finally, those who purchase both versions of the game can unlock the pesky Bat-Mite as a bonus character. Warner Bros. plans to have both versions of the game on store shelves by year's end. —**CASEY L.**



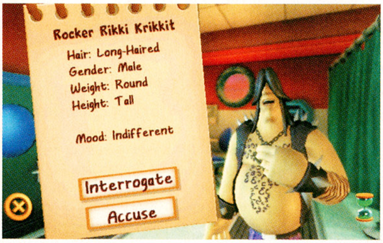
SWING THE POCKETWATCH

The Party Is Afoot

Disney gives Wii owners a chance to prove their superior sleuthing skills with **Guilty Party**.

EVERYONE LOVES A good mystery. At least that's the theory behind Disney's Guilty Party. This Wii exclusive, due in the second half of 2010, is sort of like a cross between Mario Party and the classic board game Clue. Up to four players take turns exploring a crime scene, tackling an assortment of minigames to gather clues and interrogate suspects. As you collect pertinent bits of information, you'll enter them in your notebook until you have enough evidence to piece together the identity of the culprit. A competitive Party mode pits armchair gumshoes against each other to see who can solve the mystery first, and you can even set traps to impede your rivals' progress. Story mode, on the other hand, encourages players to collaborate as members of the Dickens Detective Agency, traveling the world to put a stop to the nefarious schemes of criminal mastermind Mr. Valentine.

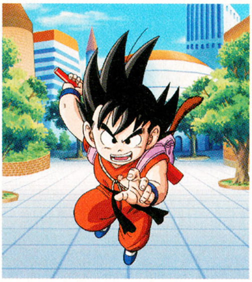
Guilty Party is in development at Wideload Games, the studio responsible for the hilarious 2005 cult hit Stubbs the Zombie (Xbox). The team seems to be bringing that same knack for humor to their latest effort—our first look at Guilty Party provided some genuine laugh-out-loud moments, aided by the comedic personalities of its cast and some excellent voice acting. There's no shortage of party games on Wii, but if this one can keep us chuckling, it could stand out from the pack. **—STEVE T.**



Rocker Rikki Krikkit

Hair: Long-Haired
Gender: Male
Weight: Round
Height: Tall

Mood: Indifferent



Dance, Monkey Boy

Son Goku lives in Namco's latest **Dragon Ball** adventure.

DRAGON BALL: ORIGINS was a cute little sleeper of a Nintendo DS action-RPG, but it went only so far into Akira Toriyama's comic-book saga. The solution: a sequel that starts right where that title left off, due out in the states this summer.

Dragon Ball: Origins 2 retells one of the franchise's longest story arcs, pitting Goku (back when he still had his cute monkey tail) against the forces of the Red Ribbon Army. On a basic level, it looks like the original game, with the same three-quarters perspective on a 3-D world, but the camera will move around during key confrontations—some boss battles, for instance, switch to a 2-D head-to-head fighting-game mode. There are special co-op challenges, too, supported with a wireless multiplayer option, so if you'd like to play with the rest of Goku's crew (like Krillin or Yamcha), you can give them a chance to snag the spotlight for a while. **—DAVID S.**

ALSO ANNOUNCED

Nintendo will bring Tecmo Koei's hack-and-slash Wii exclusive Samurai Warriors 3 to North America this fall.... Also due in the fall is EA Sports Active 2.0. The latest installment of the popular fitness franchise will come with wireless leg and arm straps, as well as a heart rate monitor.... 2K Sports has announced that NHL 2K11 will be exclusive to Wii.... Not surpisingly, Wii and DS versions of Toy Story 3 will hit alongside the film.... Also less-than-shocking: confirmation that Rock Band 3 will take the stage before the end of the year. **—STEVE T.**

GAME WATCH *forecast*

Wii		
All Star Karate	THQ	5/10
Arc Rise Fantasia	Ignition	6/10
Attack of the Movies 3D	Majesco	5/10
Batman: The Brave and the Bold: The Videogame	Warner Bros.	9/10
de Blob 2	THQ	TBA
Def Jam Rapstar	4mm	2010
Despicable Me	D3Publisher	7/10
EA Sports Active 2.0*	Electronic Arts	2010
Epic Mickey	Disney	FALL 10
FlingSmash	Nintendo	SUM 10
Flip's Twisted World	Majesco	6/10
Ghost Recon: Future Soldier	Ubisoft	HOL 10
Grease	505	TBA
Green Day: Rock Band	MTV	6/10
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	Majesco	9/10
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
Guilty Party	Disney	2010
Hard Grip: The Climbing Game	TBA	TBA
Iron Man 2	Sega	5/10
The Legend of Zelda*	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4	Warner Bros.	5/10
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	Q4 10
Line Attack Heroes	Nintendo	TBA
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	SPR 10
Lost in Shadow	Hudson	FALL 10
Metroid: Other M	Nintendo	6/10
Mr. T	TBA	TBA
NBA Jam	EA Sports	FALL 10
NHL 2K11	2K Sports	FALL 10
Pirates Pund-Arrr	Majesco	5/10
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	Ubisoft	5/10
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Rock Band 3	MTV Games	HOL 10
Rock of the Dead	Conspiracy	SUM 10
Sengoku Basara Samurai Heroes	Capcom	2010
Samurai Warriors 3	Nintendo	FALL 10
Shaun White Skateboarding	Ubisoft	TBA
Sin & Punishment: Star Successor	Nintendo	6/10
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	TBA
Stratusphere	TBA	TBA
Super Mario Galaxy 2	Nintendo	5/10
Tetris Party Deluxe	Majesco	6/10
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	EA Sports	6/10
Tournament of Legends	Sega	6/10
Toy Story 3	Disney	6/10
TrackMania	TBA	TBA
Transformers: War for Cybertron	Activision	6/10
Trauma Team	Atlus	5/10
NINTENDO DS		
Bakugan Battle Trainer	Activision	SPR 10
Batman: The Brave and the Bold: The Videogame	Warner Bros.	9/10
Crafting Mama	Majesco	FALL 10
Despicable Me	D3Publisher	7/10
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Ball: Origins 2	Namco Bandai	SUM 10
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies	Nintendo	SUM 10
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	TBA
Easy Piano	Valcon	2010
Galactic Taz Ball	Warner Bros.	FALL 10
Ghost Trick	Capcom	FALL 10
Ghostwire: Link to the Paranormal	Majesco	Q4 10
Golden Sun DS	Nintendo	2010
Grease	505	TBA
Iron Man 2	Sega	5/10
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4	Warner Bros.	5/10
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	Q4 10
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	SPR 10
Mega Man Zero Collection	Capcom	6/10
Picross 3D	Nintendo	5/10
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	Ubisoft	5/10
Project Monster	TBA	FALL 10
Puzzle Overload	Telegames	SPR 10
Puzzle Quest II	D3Publisher	5/10
River City Soccer Hooligans	Aksys	5/10
River City Super Sports Challenge	Aksys	7/10
Scribblenauts Sequel*	Warner Bros.	FALL 10
Solitaire Overload Plus	Telegames	SPR 10
Tetris Party Deluxe	Majesco	6/10
TNA Impact!: Cross the Line	SouthPeak	WIN 10
Transformers: War for Cybertron–Autobots	Activision	6/10
Transformers: War for Cybertron–Decepticons	Activision	6/10
Witch's Wish	Natsume	Q2 10

RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH. *TENTATIVE TITLE NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.

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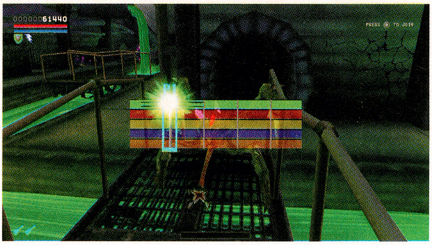
Chords vs. Corpses

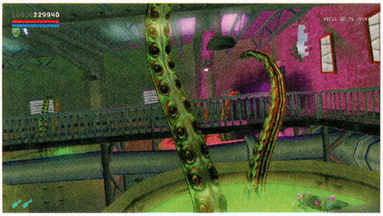
Play your guitar until the bad guys drop! Music, mayhem, and monsters combine in **Rock of the Dead** for Wii.



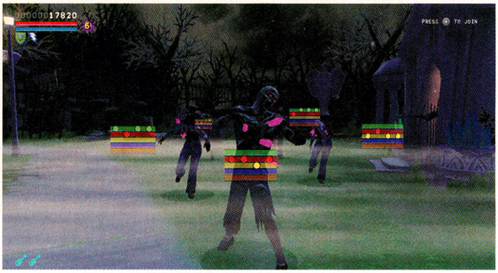
IF YOU'RE LIKE a lot of gamers out there, then you've got a plastic guitar or two sitting in your gaming room. They're great for playing Guitar Hero and Rock Band, and for living out your personal rock-god fantasies, but not much else. That's going to change this summer when Conspiracy Entertainment releases Rock of the Dead for Wii.

Strange things are afoot in Rock of the Dead. Meteors are falling, aliens are invading, and zombies—lots of zombies—are rising from the grave. The only thing that can stop them? The power of rock, of course. As the undead and other baddies appear on the screen (up to 12 at a time), it's up to you (and a friend, if playing co-op) to eliminate them by strumming the color-coded notes that appear over your foes. Larger enemies are a bit tougher; you'll defeat them in traditional rhythm-game style by playing well-timed notes as icons slide across the screen.

Campy by design, the game takes you from a trailer park to outer space, and you'll visit time-tested horror locales along the way, including a sewer and a graveyard. The nameless slacker hero—voiced by Neil Patrick Harris—is in on the joke; he continually makes wry comments about the clichéd situations he finds himself in as he searches for his would-be love interest, performed by Felicia Day. (The developers at Epicenter Studios are big fans of *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*, which starred both actors.) All this is set to rocked-out versions of classical music pieces from composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach. Ludicrous? You bet. Awesome? We hope so. —**CHRIS H.**



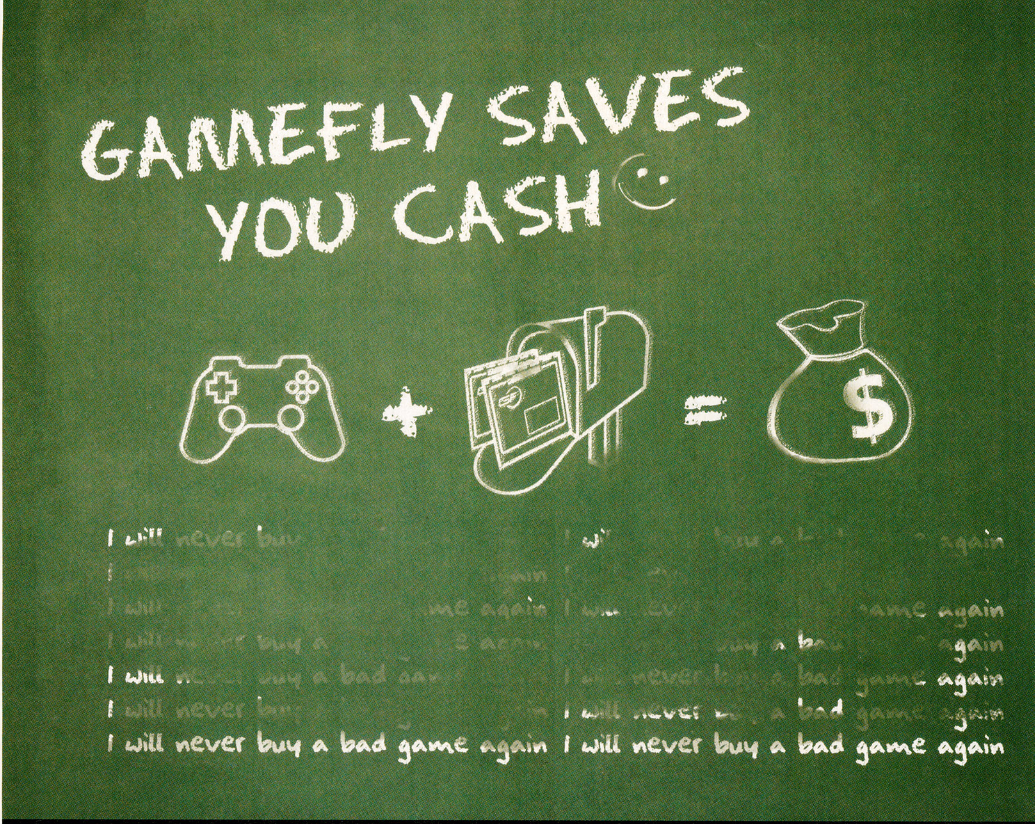
Rock of the Dead is a lot like the old Dreamcast game Typing of the Dead, only you're playing notes instead of typing words.



Trigger Happy!

At long last, **Chrono Trigger** collectibles are on the way.

Chrono Trigger fans, your wishes are finally going to come true. Following in the footsteps of numerous other legendary RPGs that have received the toy/collectible treatment, the time-traveling epic (most recently released on DS in 2008) is going to be immortalized in plastic. This September, Square Enix will release four "Formation Arts" mini-dioramas of the Chrono Trigger characters: Crono versus Magus, Crono with Robo and Ayla, Crono with Frog, and Lucca with Robo. You'll be able to buy the four-piece set for $39.99. —**CHRIS H.**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Mega Man 10—DLC

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SCRABBLE CLASSIC
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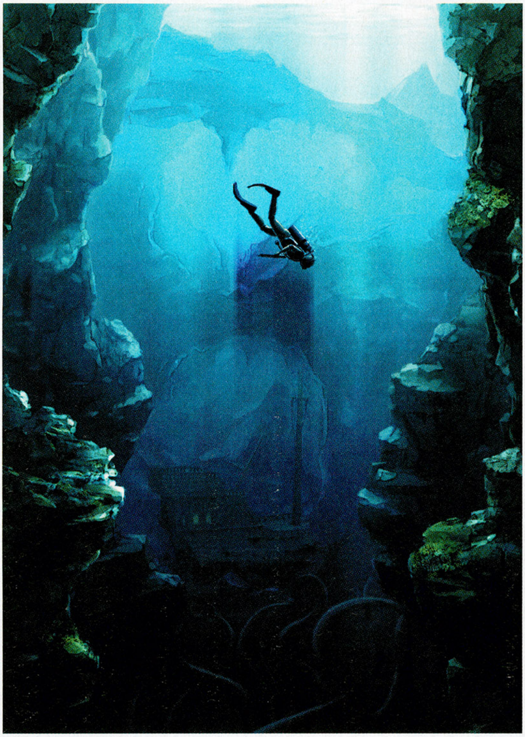
SPOTTO!
VT TENNIS



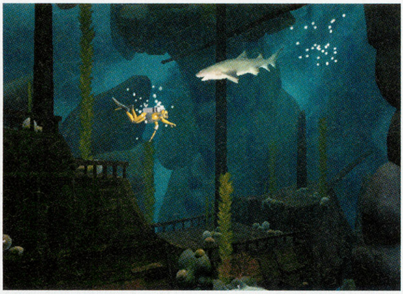
What Lies Beneath

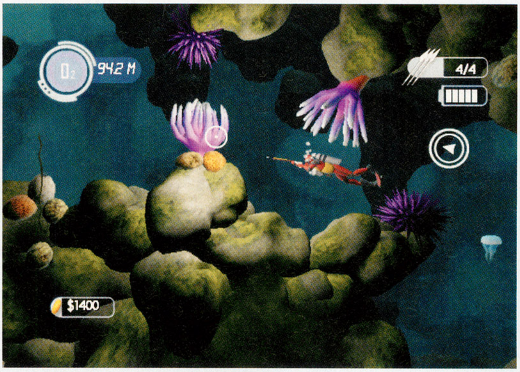
Put on your wetsuit and plunge into adventure. **Dive: The Medes Islands Secret** is unlike anything else on WiiWare.

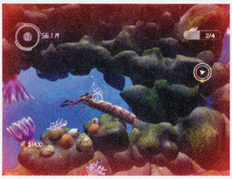
Despite the fact that it covers most of Earth, the ocean is a place of great mystery. Lost treasures, strange creatures, and who-knows-what-else lurk in its depths. That element of the unknown makes it a perfect setting for a video game adventure—a setting that you'll get to investigate in Dive: The Medes Islands Secret for WiiWare.

Part Endless Ocean, part Metroid, Dive is a nonlinear 2-D adventure game focused on exploration and objective-based gameplay. By pointing at the screen with the Wii Remote controller and pressing the B Button, you're able to use a cursor to guide the game's main character, explorer/researcher John Sanders, through mazelike aquatic caverns, undersea ruins, and beyond. By double-tapping B you can dash, and by pressing the A Button you can fire a limited number of harpoons—essential for keeping yourself safe from dangerous creatures like sharks, octopi, moray eels, and jellyfish. You can also use a map and other items by pressing directions on the Control Pad.

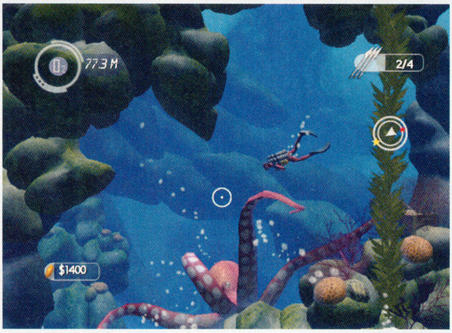
Early on you're restricted in where you can go; you can't get through dark caves without a good light, for example, and you can't dive past 200 feet without getting hurt. However, as you explore and find sunken coins and jewels, you'll be able to earn cash to purchase new equipment: wetsuits (for diving deeper), oxygen tanks (oxygen is your health; it's depleted by swimming as well as by enemy attacks), fins (for faster movement), harpoon guns (for increased firing capacity), and lanterns (for better light). The better your equipment, the more you'll be able to explore; eventually you'll reach exotic set pieces such as sunken temples, underwater crypts, and







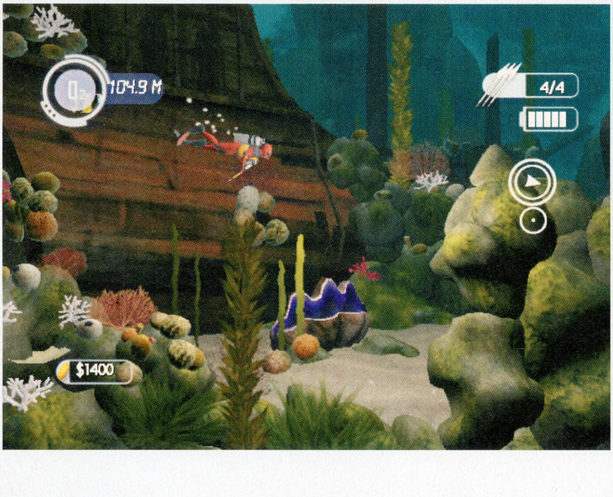
[Below] Release the kraken! Er, I mean, the giant octopus.

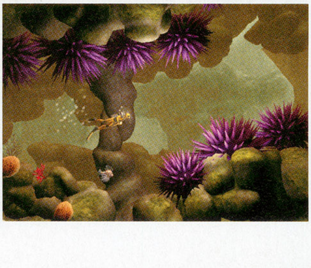


the remains of boats, planes, and submarines.

The adventure will take you to 10 undersea environments—including the Medes Islands, Santa Maria Island, Cap de Creus, Tortuga Island, the Cayman Islands, and the Bermuda Islands—all based on real locations from around the world. Your goal in each area is to find a major treasure, but there are plenty of secrets off the main path. Since your equipment upgrades are permanent, you'll be able to return to previous islands to dive deeper and swim further, allowing you to find lost relics (rubies, fossils, gold rings, pearls, etc.), earn more cash, complete hidden goals, and get ever closer to learning what the Medes Islands secret actually is. Representatives of Spain-based publisher/developer Cosmonaut Games promise that the secret is but one part of the game's complex, multilayered plot; there's even an in-game journal to keep track of the story.

As you can tell by the screenshots on this page, Dive is a very good-looking game, as well; the visuals do a great job capturing the majesty of a unique, underwater world. And if that doesn't convince you of the game's potential, consider that it's developed in collaboration with Over the Top Games, the studio responsible for the highly acclaimed WiiWare title NyxQuest: Kindred Spirits. Like the ocean itself, Dive: The Medes Islands Secret has a lot going on beneath its surface, and you should be able to experience it firsthand this spring. —**CHRIS H.**





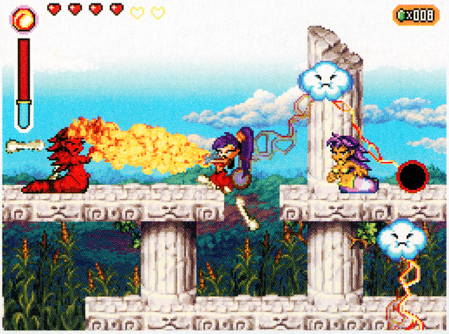
Shantae Uncorked

The half-genie is ready to emerge from her bottle! Get the full details on DSiWare's definitive action-adventure game—Shantae: Risky's Revenge.

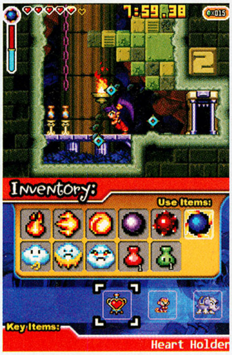
IF YOU'RE ONE of the many gamers who've been waiting for the DSiWare service's first must-have exclusive, you won't have to wait much longer—because Shantae: Risky's Revenge is it. Featuring aspects of games like The Legend of Zelda and Castlevania, Shantae: Risky's Revenge draws inspiration from some of gaming's most beloved classics and mixes it with stunning visuals and a style uniquely its own. The result is one of the most promising handheld adventures we've seen in a long time.

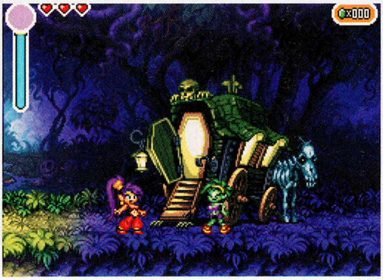
The tale begins at Shantae's lighthouse home in Scuttle Town. Having defeated notorious female pirate Risky Boots in her gaming debut (released on Game Boy Color in 2002), half-genie Shantae has nothing to do but beat up any two-bit bad guys that come along by whipping them into the dirt with her lethal ponytail. But things take an unexpected twist when Shantae's treasure-hunting adopted uncle, Mimic, unveils a magic oil lamp at the town's Relic Hunter Expo. As soon as he reveals the object, Risky crashes through the ceiling and steals the lamp for herself. A boss battle ensues against Risky's ship—the screen-filling Steam-Powered Ocean Tinker Tub—and even though it's not hard to win the fight, Risky inevitably gets the upper hand with a sneak attack and escapes.

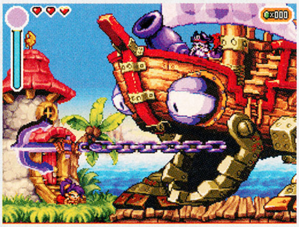
After Shantae has received her fill of humble pie, Mimic tells her the oil lamp is incredibly dangerous. Though he won't provide the whole story—he promised Shantae's mother to never speak of it—Mimic explains that the lamp's powers were stripped away but can be restored with three magic seals, which are possessed by the three barons of Sequin Land. And so your quest begins: you must find and destroy the three seals before Risky can get her greedy hands on them.



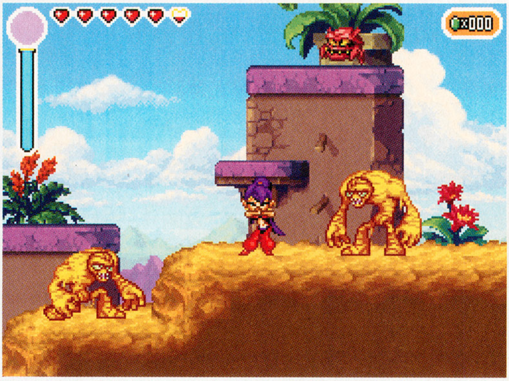
[Above] If smacking enemies around with her hair isn't cutting it, Shantae can unleash magic spells, including flames and electrified clouds.

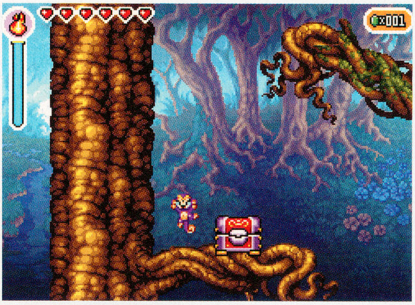






[Above] Only the finest ocean vessels are built with giant eyeballs on the bow.





[Above] In monkey form, Shantae can climb trees and reach new heights.

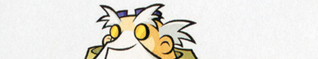
Shantae's mission takes her all over the countryside, from Scuttle Town itself to nearby pumpkin patches to the spooky Tangle Forest to a scorching desert and beyond. The nonlinear 2-D action is primarily side-scrolling, but at certain spots of some areas (indicated by a glowing arrow icon) you can press the jump button to leap into the foreground or background. This makes the game literally much deeper than it initially appears, and it allows you to bypass obstacles (say, a bottomless pit) by jumping to another plane, navigating around the obstacle, and then jumping back.

Like in any good adventure game, however, there are obstacles you can't overcome until you have the right abilities, and those abilities come in the form of belly dances that allow Shantae to change form. As you proceed through the game, you'll learn to transform Shantae into a monkey (for climbing walls and getting into small areas), an elephant (for smashing through obstacles), and a mermaid (for swimming underwater). Half the fun of exploring the game world is seeing a treasure chest that's just out of reach and remembering where it is so you can return with a new ability and claim the prize.

The transformations aren't your only abilities, either. By spending jewels and trading delicious magic jam found throughout the adventure, you can acquire a plethora of other powers, including hair-whip upgrades and three types

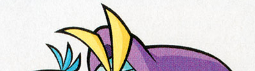
FRIENDS OF SEQUIN LAND

Shantae is the only playable character in Risky's Revenge, but she's not alone in her quest. She has several friends and acquaintances who provide support during her journey.



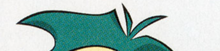
UNCLE MIMIC

Though not Shantae's uncle by blood, veteran treasure hunter Mimic is the closest thing to a family that Shantae has. He's smart, knowledgeable, and very protective of Shantae. He appears to know more about her and the dangers she faces than he's willing to share.



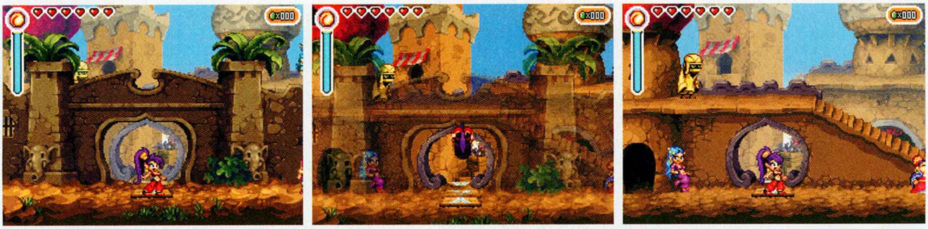
SKY

A bird trainer by profession, Sky has been Shantae's best friend since childhood. Older and more mature than Shantae, Sky is also something of a role model for her friend. She's almost always accompanied by her favorite bird, Wrench. Early in Risky's Revenge you're tasked with watching over one of Sky's eggs.



ROTTYTOPS

Rottytops is a carefree, energetic lass—who also happens to be a zombie. Morally ambiguous, she travels the world in a wagon pulled by skeletal horses, only to show up at the strangest times, either to lend a hand or to cause mischief. She has two brothers, who you'll cross paths with during the course of the game.

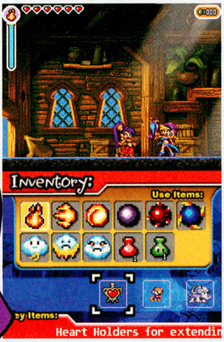


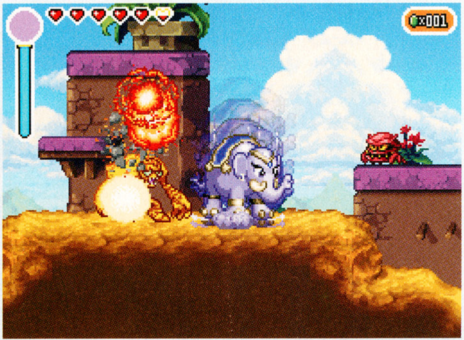
In towns and some other areas, you can move in pseudo-3-D by jumping to a different plane. You can see the other environmental layers in the background.

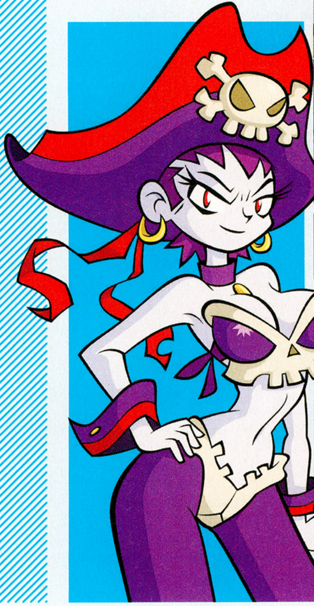
of magic. The Fireball lets you blast foes with flame (naturally); the Pike Ball rotates around you and acts as a shield; and the Crush Puff is a cloud that zaps foes with lightning or explosions. Each spell comes in three strengths; the level-three fireball, for example, unleashes a constant burst like a flamethrower. You can buy health- and magic-restoring items, too.

Eventually Shantae's quest will bring her to dangerous underground labyrinths. Akin to the dungeons in Zelda games, each labyrinth is full of traps, puzzles, and deadly enemies. In some rooms you must defeat all the bad guys to move on; in other rooms, you must whip away bricks to reveal hidden passages; and other chambers are simply about using your skills to negotiate a series of moving platforms or fire-spewing statues. There are treasures to find, keys to collect, and secrets you can uncover only by using Shantae's shape-shifting powers. And, of course, each labyrinth has a boss at the end—the first is the Squid Baron, who not only attempts to squash you flat, but also attacks by sending his squid babies after you.

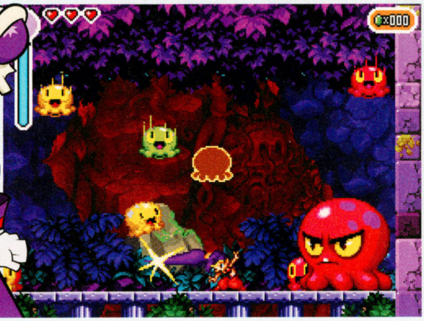
As the adventure continues you'll reach new areas of Sequin Land (including underwater environments and a network of caverns), face off against the remaining barons (the Ammo Baron and the Hypno Baron), earn upgrades for your animal forms, and hopefully put a stop to whatever diabolical scheme Risky has planned. So far Shantae: Risky's Revenge hits all the right notes: it looks amazing, controls great, boasts a great sense of humor (Castlevania and Contra fans will get some good laughs), and provides a deep, original gameplay experience. But perhaps the best part is that even after you've finished the estimated four-and-a-half-hour-long quest, there's still more to come; the game is but the first in WayForward's planned DSiWare trilogy. —**CHRIS H.**

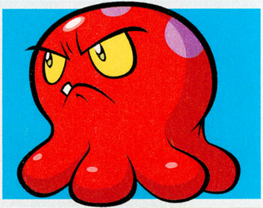






[Left] We're not sure, but something looks wrong with Risky's spine. She should probably visit a chiropractor. [Below] The Squid Baron attacks by sending his kids after you. That's fighting dirty!



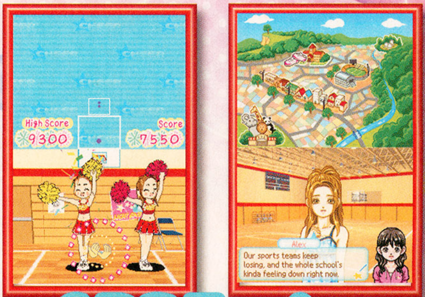


Cheer We Go
NINTENDO DS
NATSUME
Serious Fun

Cheer We Go™

We Got Spirit! How About YOU?

Star Hill's sports teams are in a major slump, and the whole town is in despair. It's up to you to revive the town's cheerleader squad and bring the winning spirit back to Star Hill!


High Score
9300
Score
7550
Alex

Our sports teams keep losing, and the whole school's kinda feeling down right now.

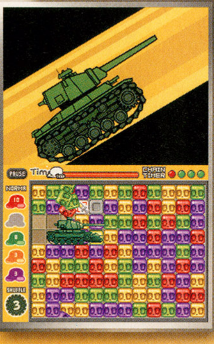
EVERYONE
E
Visit www.esrb.org for rating information.
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

••••••••••A Double Dose of DS Fun!••••••••••

Explosive Puzzle Action!

Roll out, Private! It's time to enlist in hilarious puzzle fun! Match up and destroy blocks in this easy-to-learn, tough-to-master puzzle game for players of all ages.

Squishy Tank™


PAUSE
Time
CHAIN TIMER
NORMA
10
SHUFFLE
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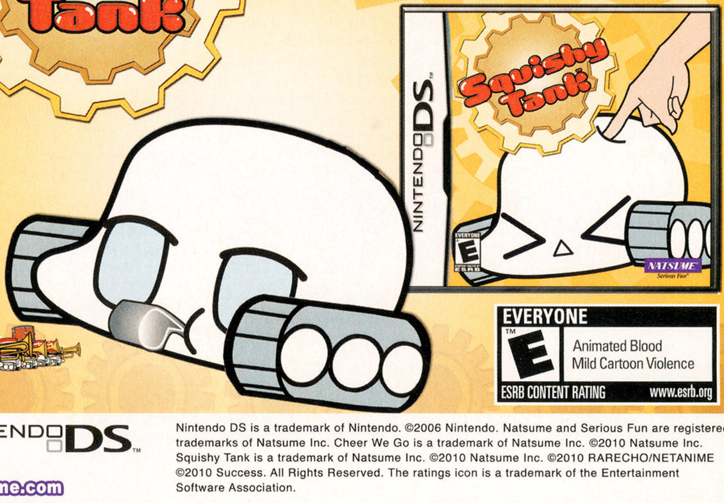
Squishy Tank
NINTENDO DS
NATSUME
Serious Fun

EVERYONE
E
Animated Blood
Mild Cartoon Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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NINTENDO DS™

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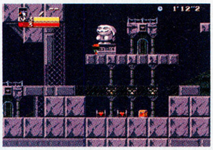
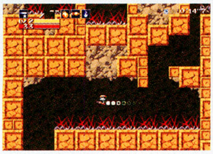
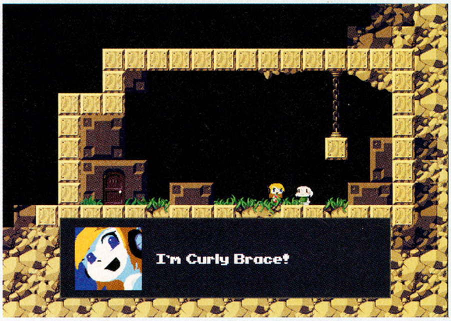
The Complete Story

There's even more to WiiWare epic **Cave Story** than initially met the eye.



[Below] Sanctuary Time Attack mode is incredibly difficult.





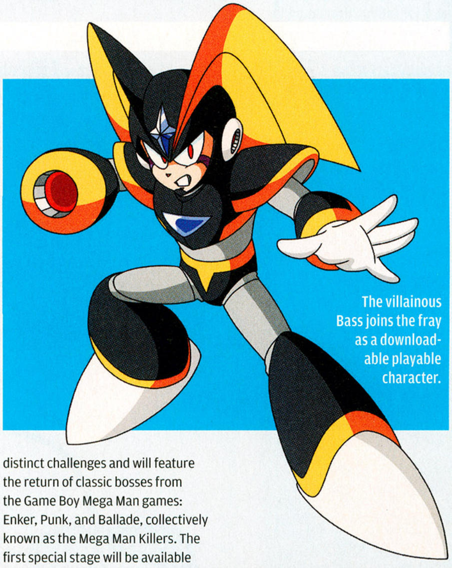
I'm Curly Brace!

ATTENTIVE READERS MAY have noticed that we jumped the gun a little bit when we reviewed Cave Story for WiiWare in Vol. 251, but the good news is that the 2-D action-adventure title should finally be out by the time you read this. (In case you missed our review, we gave the game the highest recommendation.) The even better news is that as a side effect of the game's delay, Cave Story comes loaded with three bonus modes that are included at no extra charge. Boss Attack mode lets you race the clock as you face off against every boss in the game in sequence; Sanctuary Time Attack mode lets you attempt to conquer the extremely challenging Sanctuary secret area as fast as possible; and Curly Story mode lets you play through the entire adventure as heroine Curly Brace (who appears as a nonplayable character in the regular Story mode), complete with modified story scenes. Although all three new modes are available from the get-go, you might want to wait until you've played some of the regular game before you dig into them; Boss Attack and Sanctuary Time Attack in particular can be pretty tough for inexperienced players. Nonetheless, the added modes prove the old saying true: good things *do* come to those who wait. —**CHRIS H.**

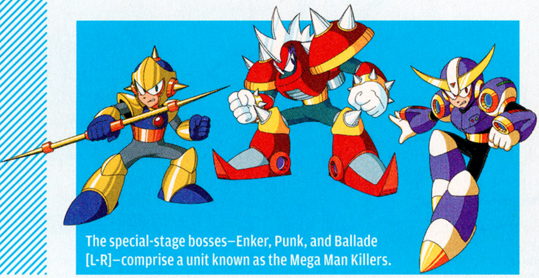
All Your Bass Are Belong to Us

New characters and new stages come to **Mega Man 10** via downloadable content.

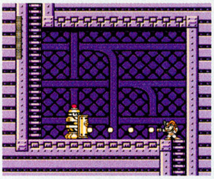
HOW DO YOU make a great WiiWare game even better? By extending the fun with downloadable content—that's how. And that's exactly what Capcom's doing with Mega Man 10 by releasing new stages and a new playable character for the latest chapter of the venerable action series. On April 5 you'll be able to download Mega Man's rival, Bass, as the game's third playable character. With a dash maneuver, multi-directional firing, and the ability to merge with his canine companion Treble, Bass provides his own unique gameplay experience for an additional 200 Wii Points. Fans can also look forward to three downloadable special stages for the game's Time Attack mode. These stages will have their own distinct challenges and will feature the return of classic bosses from the Game Boy Mega Man games: Enker, Punk, and Ballade, collectively known as the Mega Man Killers. The first special stage will be available on April 5, followed by the other two on April 26; each stage will cost 100 Wii Points. Finally, an Endless Stage mode will become available April 26 for 300 Wii Points. Like the Endless Stage in Mega Man 9, the mode is a nonstop gauntlet of obstacles and enemies, and the goal is to get as far as possible; scores are posted to an online leaderboard. —**CHRIS H.**

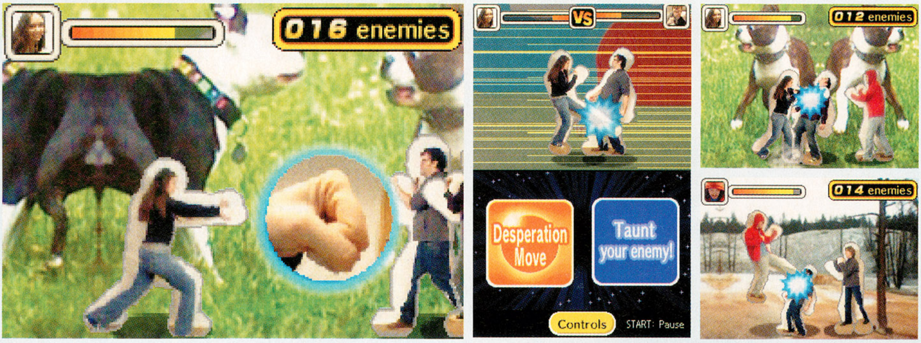


The villainous Bass joins the fray as a downloadable playable character.



The special-stage bosses—Enker, Punk, and Ballade [L-R]—comprise a unit known as the Mega Man Killers.

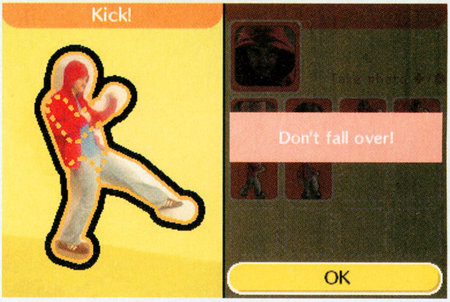


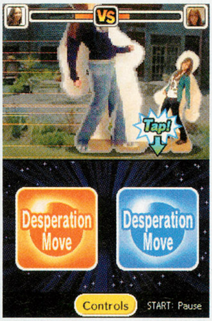

016 enemies
VS
012 enemies
014 enemies
Desperation Move
Taunt your enemy!
Controls
START: Pause

[Above] Forget about Ryu, Goku, Naruto, and Liu Kang. Thanks to Photo Dojo, you and your friends get to be the greatest fighters in the world.

Photo-Finish Him!

A picture's worth a thousand punches in Photo Dojo for DSiWare.


Kick!
Take photo
Don't fall over!
OK

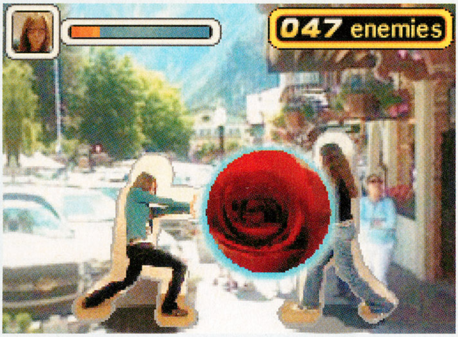

VS
Tap!
Desperation Move
Desperation Move
Controls
START: Pause

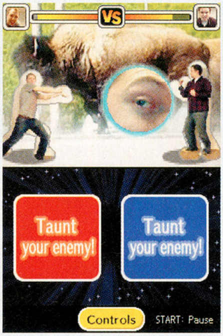
[Above] When things get rough, unleash your Desperation Move.

PHOTO DOJO PROBABLY won't replace Super Smash Bros. Brawl or Tatsunoko vs. Capcom as the go-to fighting game in your video game library, but when it comes to silly fun and laugh-out-loud action, Photo Dojo has the competition beat. This Nintendo-published DSiWare title isn't your run-of-the-mill fighting game; it's a fighting game starring you, your friends, and maybe even your kitty cat.

Using the Nintendo DSi's built-in camera, you'll take pictures of yourself or your friends in 13 different poses—punching, kicking, crouching, taunting, winning, losing, throwing a fireball, etc.—that become the in-game character graphics; it's kind of like the original Mortal Kombat but without the muscles (or the blood). You'll also record 10 sound effects (using the system's built-in microphone) that correspond to various poses, moves, and taunts. After you assign your character one of four fighting styles (Loose Cannon, Shanghai Dragon, Kung-Fu Master, and Judo Warrior) that determine your signature move, you're ready to jump into battle in one of the game's fighting arenas—which you can also create from scratch using your own photos.

The fighting itself is pretty simple; you walk, jump, and duck using the Control Pad, and attack by pressing A in conjunction with specific directions. Press the A Button by itself to kick, forward and A to punch, back and A to toss a fireball, and down and A to unleash a signature attack. Buttons on the touch screen execute special moves. In single-player mode, your goal is to survive as long as you can while you battle an army of 100 computer-controlled foes in side-scrolling action; two-player mode pits you and a friend against each other in one-on-one combat using a single Nintendo DSi system. Fists will fly, funny bones will be tickled, and hilarity is guaranteed to ensue when Photo Dojo arrives this spring. —**CHRIS H.**


047 enemies


VS
Taunt your enemy!
Taunt your enemy!
Controls
START: Pause

EVALUATION STATION

WiiWARE

ART OF BALANCE

PUBLISHER: **SHIN'EN MULTIMEDIA**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **800**

Physics-based stacking games are common, but Shin'en eschews the standard goal (height) for something far more interesting; working with a finite set of shapes, players must form stacks that remain stable for three seconds. This welcome tweak makes the game more "puzzle," less "frantic pile-up." Slick presentation, the ability to choose your progression path, challenge levels that introduce new puzzle dynamics, and a versus mode round things out nicely. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

WiiWARE

20
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DART RAGE

PUBLISHER: **JV GAMES**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
Wii POINTS: **600**

I don't care much for darts, but I like this game—quite a lot, in fact. In other words, JV Games kicks ass. They started by taking a novel approach to Wii darts games: make a control scheme that *works*. Yes! Armed with that, players can actually *enjoy* a minimal but well-chosen assortment of games. Add in snappy pacing, multiplayer, and cut-above graphics, and you might find yourself forgiving the game's absurd attempt to convince you that darts can be "extreme." —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

WiiWARE

DRACULA: UNDEAD AWAKENING

PUBLISHER: **CHILLINGO**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Dracula: Undead Awakening comes close to being a really fun shooter. It looks great, there are plenty of weapons and upgrades, and the enemies attack fast and relentlessly. The problem is the lack of content; there are only three arenas, and all four modes are essentially survival variants in which you just blast everything until you drop. There are no levels to explore and little sense of progression other than achieving a new high score. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

WiiWARE

FAMILY GO-KART RACING

PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
GENRE: **RACING**
Wii POINTS: **500**

At first blush, this racer shows promise: multiple drivers (though no Miis), six cars to choose from (with unique handling and varied models), and a passable variety of track environments. At second blush, the sickly pallor sets in; we're talkin' karts-on-ice handling, half-baked animation (can I get some front wheels that turn, please?), and steering that's broken. But hey, nothing brings family together like a lousy game, right? —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWARE

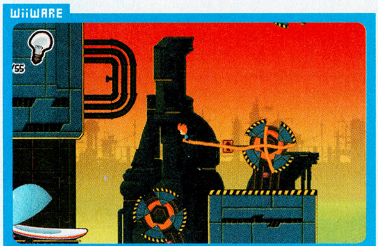
GHOSTSLAYER

PUBLISHER: **GEVO ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **600**

A less charming and more ghostified version of the Showdown mode from Wii Sports Resort Swordplay, GhostSlayer does, at least, control well. Swinging the Wii Remote (with or without the Wii MotionPlus accessory) like a sword, you duel against deadly specters through a series of samey environments. In fact, sameness permeates this title; even the unlockable upgrades can't offset GhostSlayer's overall repetitiveness. —**JUSTIN C.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWARE



MAX & THE MAGIC MARKER

PUBLISHER: **PRESS PLAY** GENRE: **PLATFORMER** Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Combining elements from Wii titles A Boy and His Blob and Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter, Max & the Magic Marker is a charming side-scrolling puzzle-platformer. Young protagonist Max chases after a baddy he created (à la Comix Zone for the Sega Genesis), entering a storybook world in which he must avoid or defeat enemies and navigate to the end-level goal while picking up a variety of widgets along the way. These collectibles include orbs of ink that refill Max's magic marker, which you use to draw objects such as bridges (to cross gaps) and weights (to crush enemies). It works well for the most part (the good physics help), though the controls could be a tad tighter. Drawing with the Wii Remote just lacks the precision you would get if you used, say, a stylus. —**JUSTIN C.**

Recommended

WiiWARE

MOUSE HOUSE

PUBLISHER: **BIG JOHN GAMES**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **600**

Retro-style games can be beautifully nostalgic. They can also be cheap and tedious. Mouse House lands somewhere in the middle. It offers the top-down, sprite-puzzle gameplay of yesteryear: players navigate single-screen "dungeons" to collect blocks of cheese to open an exit. (Whether this gameplay still holds charm is a matter of taste, of course.) What it decidedly doesn't offer is polish, adequate level variety, or compelling replay value. Squeak. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

WiiWARE

Phoenix

Mr. Wellington loves large bananas!

PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY JUSTICE FOR ALL

PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM** GENRE: **ADVENTURE** Wii POINTS: **1,000**

I used to be convinced that Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All (the second title in the Ace Attorney franchise) was easily the best game in the series, but after playing this no-frills WiiWare port of the DS game, I'm no longer so sure. There's nothing wrong with this humorous point-and-click courtroom drama—it's still an excellent title full of great characters, clever writing, and new gameplay elements that add more depth to the proceedings—but the story in the original game is stronger and tighter. Nonetheless, Justice for All does a fine job picking up where its predecessor left off. —**CHRIS H.**

Recommended

WiiWARE

HAPPY HAMMERIN'

PUBLISHER: **GAMEBRIDGE**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Do you like Whac-a-Mole? If you play Happy Hammerin', you'd better, because that's what this is—Whac-a-Mole in space, Whac-a-Mole in feudal Japan, co-op Whac-a-Mole, competitive Whac-a-Mole, etc. It's not exactly thrilling, but it's a solid rendition of the classic game. It features plenty of modes and plays well except for the occasions when it can't tell if you're taking a swing or simply repositioning the hammer on the screen. **—CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

FATAL FURY SPECIAL

PLATFORM: **NEOGEO**
PUBLISHER: **D4 ENTERPRISE/SNK**
GENRE: **FIGHTING**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1993**

Fatal Fury Special is sort of a "special edition" of Fatal Fury 2, featuring upgraded gameplay and adding a handful of playable characters to the roster. Despite these upgrades, however, this title is tough to recommend to anyone other than the die-hard fans of Terry Bogard and company. While the gameplay is certainly solid, the old-school difficulty level can be a barrier to entry for newbies. **—JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

Oct
Fight
White
Black
Call
Item
HP
Rydia 34/ 133
Cecil 286/ 287
Tellah 340/ 340

FINAL FANTASY II

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
GENRE: **RPG** ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1991**

Casey L's Pick

Despite the II in the title, this is the game most people now know as Final Fantasy IV. And you've had plenty of opportunities to buy it; it's been remade several times, most recently as a DS version that boasts vastly improved graphics and deeper character-customization options. But if you want to play the 1991 original, you'll find it's still got a lot to offer. Its once-deep story is primitive by today's standards, but it still has lots of charm, a well-paced quest, and a memorable soundtrack.

Recommended

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

SONIC & KNUCKLES

PLATFORM: **SEGA GENESIS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1994**

Like the three games that preceded it, Sonic & Knuckles is a platforming masterpiece. It mixes high-speed action with all sorts of brilliant gimmicks and some of the best level design of the 16-bit era. Best of all, the Virtual Console version retains the lock-on technology of the Genesis original, allowing you to play as Knuckles in Sonic the Hedgehog 3 by "attaching" the two games to each other. **—STEVE T.**

Recommended

WiiWARE

WARMEN TACTICS

PUBLISHER: **CALARIS**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **800**

Don't be fooled by WarMen Tactics's gritty urban motif. This isn't a game for hardcore-military-shooter fans—or anyone else, for that matter. Featuring an asinine story, awful animation, awkward controls, a broken ammo system, and muddy, low-res visuals, this choppy on-rails shooter is deficient in just about every department. Even the title screen is busted; when you try to start a new game, you're asked "On" or "Off." What the heck? **—CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE

chair
10
34
AGENIUS
q w e r t z u i o p
a s d f g h j k l
y x c v b n m
Sh Space áé Del

4 TRAVELLERS: PLAY SPANISH

PUBLISHER: **AGENIUS INTERACTIVE**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

I like the idea of learning a foreign language through a video game, but the problem with this title's board-game mode is that it tests you, but it doesn't teach you. On top of that, the actual gameplay mechanics just aren't fun. **—CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE

AURA-AURA CLIMBER

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Traditional controls propel your character into a midair grappling frenzy in Aura-Aura Climber. Early level design is iffy, but the introduction of new traps and types of grappling points makes the route more direct and the challenge more intense. **—GEORGE S.**

Recommended

DSiWARE

Play time
Score
Perks
Enemies
Total

DRACULA: UNDEAD AWAKENING

PUBLISHER: **CHILLINGO**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

It's impressive how many onscreen enemies and how much shooting action is crammed into this DSiWare title, but like its nearly identical WiiWare cousin, this version of Dracula: Undead Awakening doesn't offer enough content to sink your teeth into. **—CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

ELEMENTAL MASTERS

PUBLISHER: **IBXGAMES**
GENRE: **CARD**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

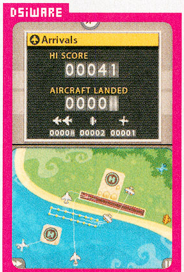
The lack of a tutorial mode hurts, but once you get the hang of the gameplay, this odd Magic: The Gathering/tic-tac-toe hybrid proves fairly entertaining. The Puzzle Quest-style RPG mode gives the single-player game a good amount of depth, too. **—PHIL T.**

Recommended

EVALUATION STATION

Wii WARE
VIRTUAL CONSOLE
DSiWARE

DSiWARE



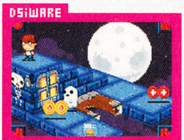
FLIGHT CONTROL

PUBLISHER: FIREMINT
GENRE: STRATEGY
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 500

It's realistic to assume that you'd be fired from plotting landing patterns for aircraft after a crash, but the one-strike rule makes Flight Control sessions too short. That said, it's exciting while it lasts (you juggle upwards of 10 aircraft at once), and it's perfectly suited to stylus play. —GEORGE S.

Recommended

DSiWARE



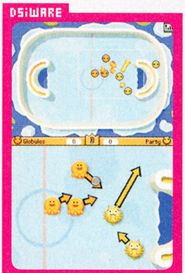
FLIPPER

PUBLISHER: XFORM
GENRE: PUZZLE
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 500

It's hard not to be charmed by Flipper, thanks to its retrolicious pixelated graphics and bouncy music. Unfortunately, the gameplay, while decent, doesn't quite live up to the aesthetics. Figuring out how to best use the terrain-altering power-ups to solve each stage is fun, but the imprecise touch-screen controls and limited camera angles are often more difficult to deal with than the occasionally simple puzzles. It's also a fairly short game that offers little replay value. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



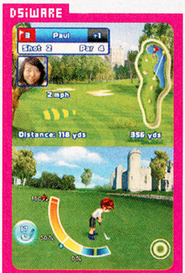
GLOBULOS PARTY

PUBLISHER: GLOBZ
GENRE: SPORTS
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 500

Take an impressive array of intriguing, billiards-esque minigames, replace the balls with amusing creatures, wrap it in creative slickness, then throw in DS Download Play multiplayer, and you've got Globulos Party. You've also got an absolutely *superb* value. —PATRICK C.

Recommended

DSiWARE



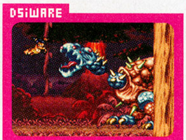
LET'S GOLF

PUBLISHER: GAMELOFT
GENRE: SPORTS
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 800

Gameloft's golf entry lets you watch the power meter go up and down as much as you want before you swing. That's good, because if you're a hair off, you'll miss big. It has a cheery sheen, but the three courses are generic, and green-reading is well-nigh impossible. —GEORGE S.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



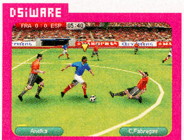
PREHISTORIK MAN

PUBLISHER: INTERPLAY
GENRE: PLATFORMER
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 800

Aside from some pretty graphics and a good soundtrack, Prehistorik Man is a rather dull platformer with uninspired levels and poorly implemented secrets that rely on randomly swinging your weapon. The lousy hit detection has you taking damage when you're nowhere near an enemy, and occasionally remaining unscathed as an enemy passes right over you. And why must you restart a level after entering a shop that's halfway through a stage? That's just bad design. —PHIL T.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



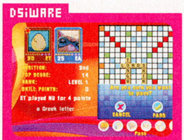
REAL SOCCER 2010

PUBLISHER: GAMELOFT
GENRE: SPORTS
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 800

Like Real Soccer 2009, Real Soccer 2010 is a good value—you get an easy-to-play FIFA-esque soccer title for a budget price. If you're a footie fan who missed out on the 2009 version, definitely give the solid 2010 edition a go. However, if you've already purchased last year's game, I can't say this one's a must-buy; although the game has a few updates, the core experience remains very much the same. —JUSTIN C.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



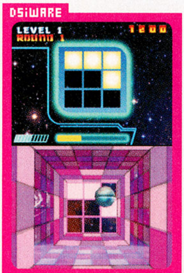
SCRABBLE CLASSIC

PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
GENRE: PUZZLE
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 800

Scrabble is Scrabble, of course, but this particular board game fairs well in the digital world; in addition to automatic scorekeeping (yay!) EA provides a built-in dictionary (woot!) and stat tracking to gauge your development as a player. Two game modes (Classic and Speed), basic unlockables, and a grab bag of game settings (AI skill level, point and time limits, etc.) round things out nicely. Multiplayer is here, but all players must purchase the game: weak. —PATRICK C.

Recommended

DSiWARE



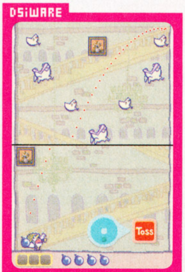
SPACEBALL: REVOLUTION

PUBLISHER: VIRTUAL TOYS
GENRE: PUZZLE
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 500

Very similar to its WiiWare counterpart (released a few months ago), Spaceball: Revolution is a puzzle game in which you activate squares by throwing balls past obstacles. The concept is decent and the control is solid, but the simple action gets stale fast. —CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



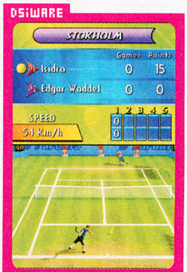
SPOTTO!

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: PUZZLE
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 200

Bomb-tossing duck Spotto's aim is spotty. As you turn a dial to set up the shot, a line describes the explosive's trajectory, but it doesn't account for gravity, making it all guesswork. Luckily, failure is not costly—you can repeat each level until you destroy all the targets. —GEORGE S.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

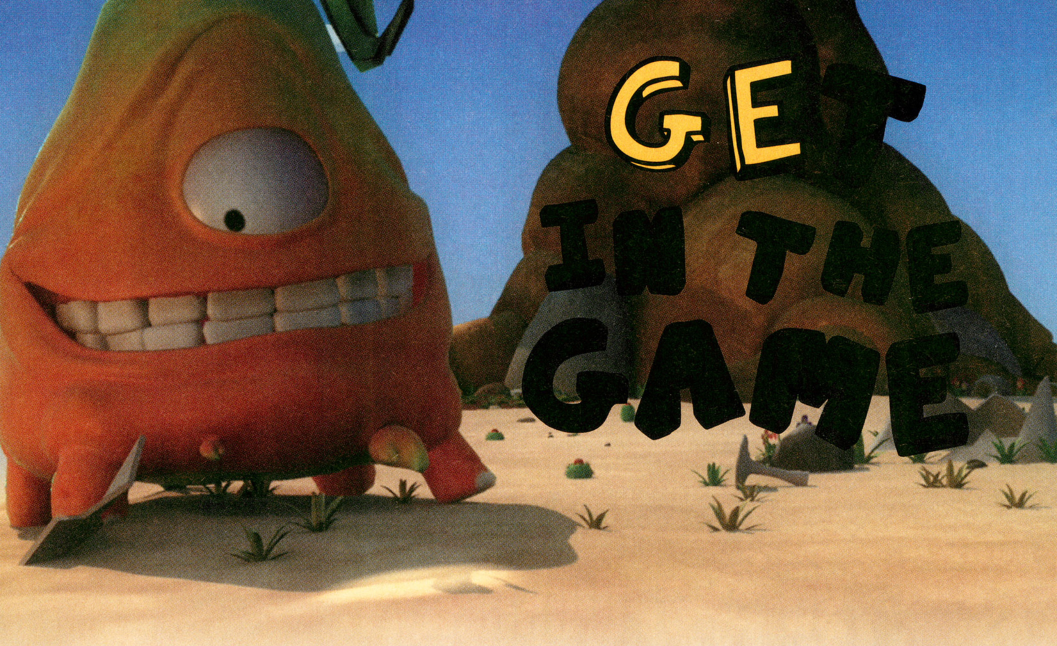


VT TENNIS

PUBLISHER: VIRTUAL TOYS
GENRE: SPORTS
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: 500

Your VT Tennis player's stroke looks realistic, but takes too long to unfold. Also, you can't hit on the run, which means that you have to position, plant, and swing a good, long time before the ball arrives. If you can adapt to that, though, the rest of the game is a solid play. —GEORGE S.

Hmmm...



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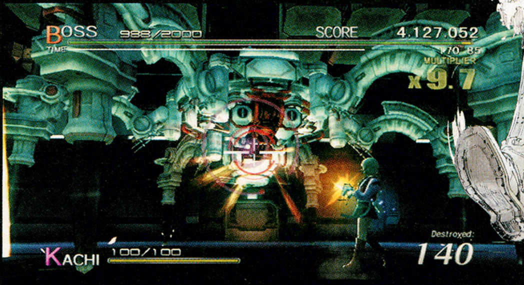


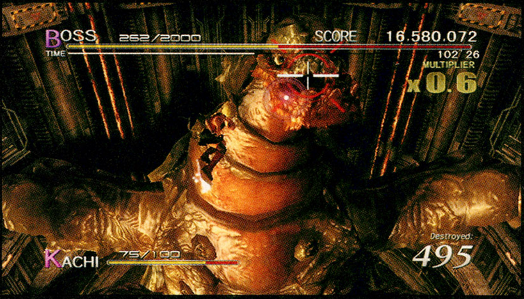
SCORE 16.690
x2.
22

SIN AND PUNISHMENT: STAR SUCCESSOR

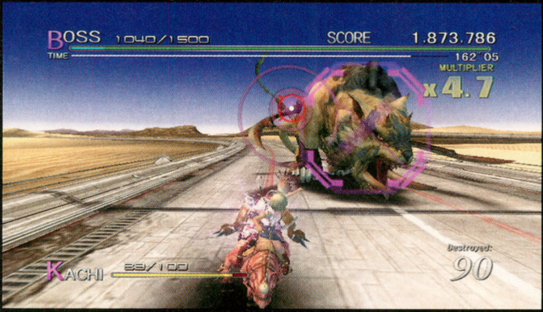
Nintendo is finally dishing out the punishment we so richly deserve.

SHOOTER FANS BROKE out into a cold sweat when winter came and went without the expected release of Sin and Punishment: Star Successor (formerly Sin and Punishment 2). After all, the original Sin and Punishment slipped so far through the cracks that it didn't hit Western audiences until it surfaced on Virtual Console seven years after the game was completed. But there's no need to worry about history repeating itself; developer Treasure has been toiling all along on a North American version of Star Successor, continuously refining the title.

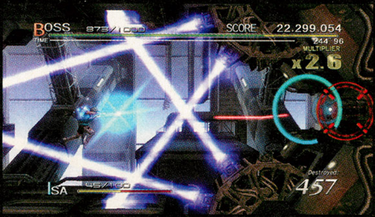
If you aren't familiar with the franchise, picture old-school scrolling shooters like Contra mashed together with more-recent first-person shooters like Panzer Dragoon. Then throw in swords, jet packs, vehicles, and a host of other surprises to create an experience that changes not just from level to level, but from minute to minute. The only consistent elements in the ever-shifting action are the relentless tempo and perpetually tough level of difficulty.

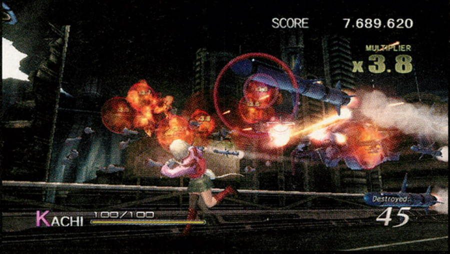


Treasure games are never mere button-mashers, and Sin and Punishment: Star Successor is no exception—players will need agile minds as well as nimble fingers. The game's bosses have several phases with numerous modes of attack, and instead of pattern memorization, their designs encourage trial-and-error learning. A boss may seem impossible to defeat at first glance, but with each battle you'll learn something new: the birds that turn into pillars of fire can be blasted away just before they transform, the single blue projectile in a barrage of red ones will speed you up instead of slowing you down, a screen-spanning detonation that's difficult to dodge can be headed off entirely with a well-timed sword swipe in just the right spot. With careful experimentation, seemingly insurmountable challenges become easier and easier, and persistent players will soon find themselves playing for high scores instead of mere survival. At that point, it's a whole new game: you can replay any completed level, and strategies shift dramatically when you take the game's scoring system into account. Instead of heading off threats, you'll want to fill the screen with enemies and their projectiles so you'll have more targets with which to raise your point multipliers. Additionally, there are megapoint medals hidden throughout each stage,


BOSS 1040/1500
SCORE 1.873.786
TIME 162˝05
MULTIPLIER
x4.7
Destroyed:
90
KACHI 23/100

[Left] In the future, giant mutant rats are a major cause of traffic congestion.


BOSS 873/1000
SCORE 22.299.054
TIME
244˝96
MULTIPLIER
x2.6
ISA 45/100
Destroyed:
457

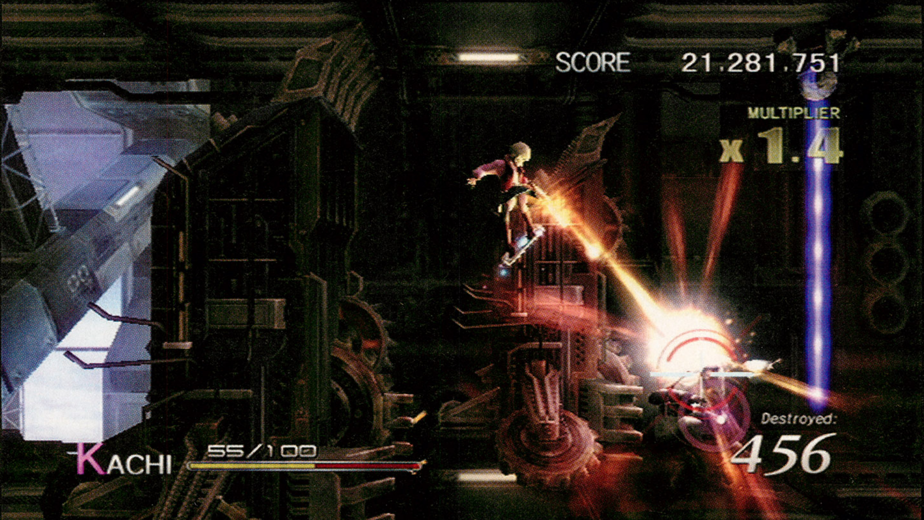

SCORE 7.689.620
MULTIPLIER
x3.8
KACHI 100/100
Destroyed:
45

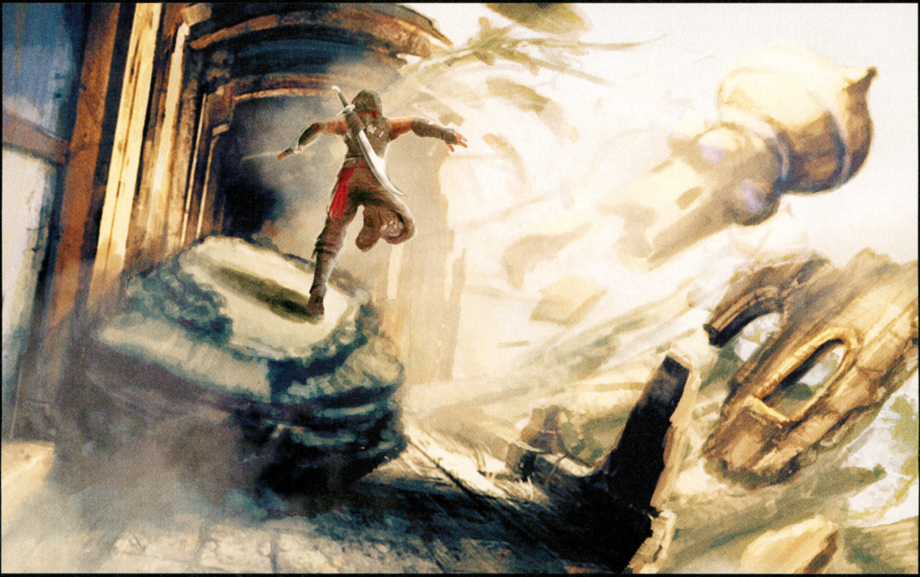
and you can unlock them only with clever tactics like bouncing one enemy's projectile into another or figuring out creative ways to damage a boss. When you've earned a high score, you can post it to an online international leaderboard.

Rather than forcing players to conform to a set control scheme, Star Successor offers a stunning array of options. Most players will likely choose the standard Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers, but those who prefer a more traditional console experience can use a Classic Controller, while Sin and Punishment purists can plug in a GameCube controller and use the scheme pioneered in the original title. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses; an analog stick provides an advantage when enemies are clustered, but the Wii Remote's pointer can more quickly react to enemies coming from opposite directions. (Treasure has carefully balanced the game to make all the options viable.) Additionally, the game's two characters have a number of significant differences. Kachi is a bit easier for beginners, with autotargeting and lock-on missile attacks, while Isa offers a bit more power, a longer sword, and a massive charge-up blast. Only one character can appear onscreen, but a second player can play as the unseen partner, controlling a crosshairs in a Super Mario Galaxy-esque co-op mode.

Star Successor may not have the same marquee name recognition as Nintendo's other early summer Wii releases (Super Mario Galaxy 2 and Metroid: Other M), but if you like your action fast, fierce, and frantic, it would be a sin to overlook this meticulously crafted shooter. —CASEY L.

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
Wii DEVELOPER: **TREASURE**
RELEASE: **JUNE 2010**


SCORE 21.281.751
MULTIPLIER
x1.4
KACHI 55/100
Destroyed:
456



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

Welcome back, your sandiness!

SURE, SAND "gets everywhere," as Anakin Skywalker so eloquently put it, but that's actually a good thing in Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands. After all, the eponymous hero—with the assistance of his new sidekick, a fairylike female djinn—can use sand to create objects such as handholds or pillars pretty much wherever he pleases. (These abilities are especially useful considering that the prince lacks time-controlling powers in this post-The Sands of Time/pre-Warrior Within interquel.)

Of course, the prince starts the game off powerless, but he does have his uncannily good athleticism at his disposal. As structures collapse around him, the prince can leap, climb, shimmy, and wall-run to safety. Making things easier is the game's inclusion of a line representing the prince's reach. If the line appears, he'll make the jump; if it doesn't, he won't.

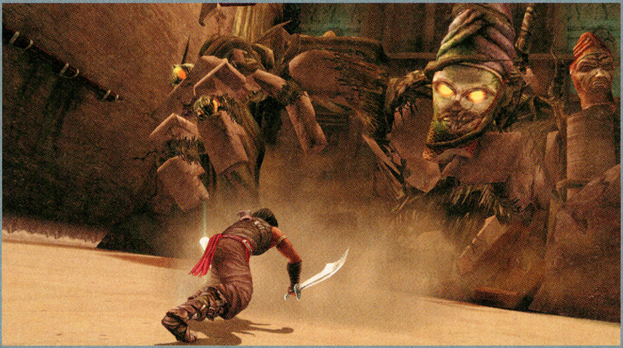
[Below] Wall-running, spikes, and monsters? Yeah, this is definitely Prince of Persia.

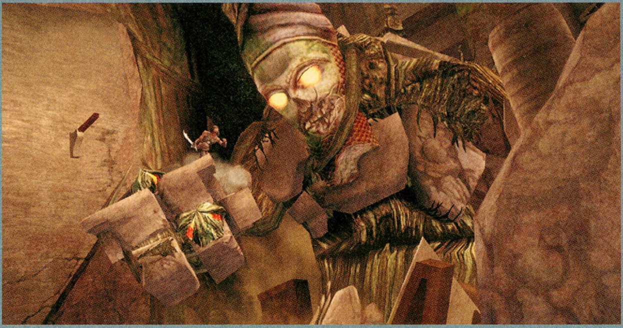
Athleticism will only get you so far, though, as you will encounter numerous areas that you can't quite reach by the prince's skills alone. Fortunately, while chasing after an enormous monster (why, we don't know; Ubisoft declined to talk about story details during our hands-on play test), the prince happens upon a magic gate leading to room that has a statue of a woman in the middle of it. The djinn enters the statue, and the prince proceeds to give it a kiss on the lips (yes, it's a little weird), which grants him a new power—the Sand Ring. By pointing at a wall in the game with the Wii Remote controller and tapping B, you can spawn handholds that help you climb up surfaces. However, Sand Rings can be created only on specific plates at this early stage—this initial limitation eases you into things before giving you nigh-unlimited freedom further into the adventure.

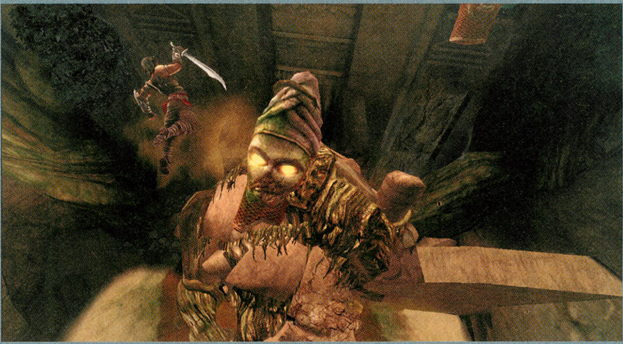
The prince later acquires the Sand Pillar and Sand Sphere skills as he traverses the ancient city. Which powers you use depends on where you're pointing the remote: you can point at the floor and press B to create a pillar that you can use as a platform to launch off of, and point at the prince to encase his majesty in a floating sphere. The latter ability is perhaps the most useful because it can be used to save the prince's life. If you misjudge a jump and start falling into oblivion, for example, you can quickly produce a bubble to stop your descent. Then you create a Sand Ring on the wall, grab it, and climb back up. Depending on how far you've fallen, you may need to make more than one ring to reach a platform, meaning you'll have to alternate between creating Sand Rings and Sand Spheres since you

THERE BE GIANTS

In addition to regular enemies—some of which you may recognize from The Sands of Time—the prince will face enormous bosses. This one, a creature of stone and vines (there are a lot of dangerous plants in this game, including deadly red ones you must avoid at all costs), will try to crush you with its fists. Hit the weak points on its hands, and the boss will be downed long enough for you to jump onto its head, allowing you to damage the creature via a quick-time event.







can't create more than one of the same structure in succession. (Being able to just create a row of Sand Rings would be too easy.) In fact, many of the areas toward the end of the game require that you combine sand powers in a similar fashion.

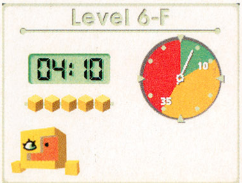
The sand powers aren't limited to platforming, however—you can also use them in combat. For instance, you can freeze an enemy in place by pointing at him and pressing B, allowing you to run up to him and slash with the Wii Remote or punch with the Nunchuk. This is particularly handy when encountering a group of foes that has a designated leader; take him out, and the rest of the baddies will flee.

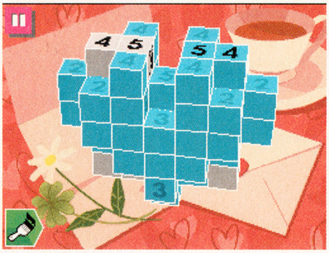
Despite its differences from other games in the series, Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands feels like part of the Sands of Time franchise. (Having actor Yuri Lowenthal voice the prince once again certainly helps.) Whether the game as a whole can live up to the standards set by the acclaimed GameCube trilogy remains to be seen, but we're very encouraged by what we've played. —JUSTIN C.

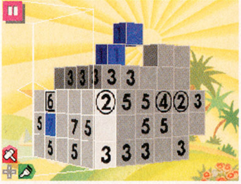
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT QUEBEC CITY**
Wii RELEASE: **MAY 2010**

Royal Return

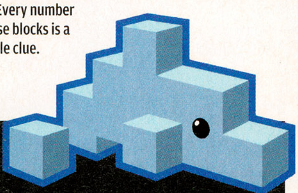
Fans of old-school gaming, The Forgotten Sands has just the thing for you: the Super NES version of Prince of Persia. The original prince (who is not the same character as the one from the Sands of Time series) does not have the luxury of relying on time- or sand-controlling powers—he relies solely on his nimbleness to survive in this challenging game.







[Left] Every number on these blocks is a valuable clue.

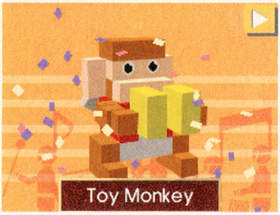


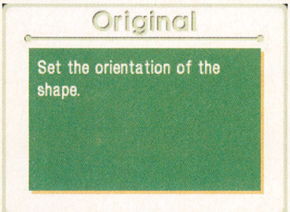
PICROSS 3D

No special glasses needed—just lots of brain cells.

Following in the tradition of Picross DS (Nintendo Power's pick for best puzzle game of 2007), Picross 3D is an addictive brainteaser in which you use numeric clues to reveal hidden shapes. Similar to regular 2-D Picross, each puzzle in Picross 3D begins with a solid block of cubes, and by examining numbers on the sides of the block, you'll deduce which cubes are used to form an object hidden within. All it takes is the press of a button and a tap of the stylus to eliminate a useless cube (or mark an essential one, thus rendering it indestructible until you say otherwise). After you've carved away all of the unnecessary blocks, you'll discover the 3-D shape hidden inside, which could be anything from a car to a piece of fruit to a cell phone to a bunny rabbit. There are 350 puzzles included with the game, plus you'll be able to create your own (and share them with friends locally or online) and download even more puzzles via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. —**CHRIS H.**

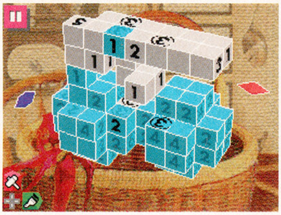
DS PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **HAL LABORATORY**
RELEASE: **MAY 2010**

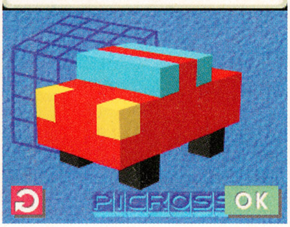


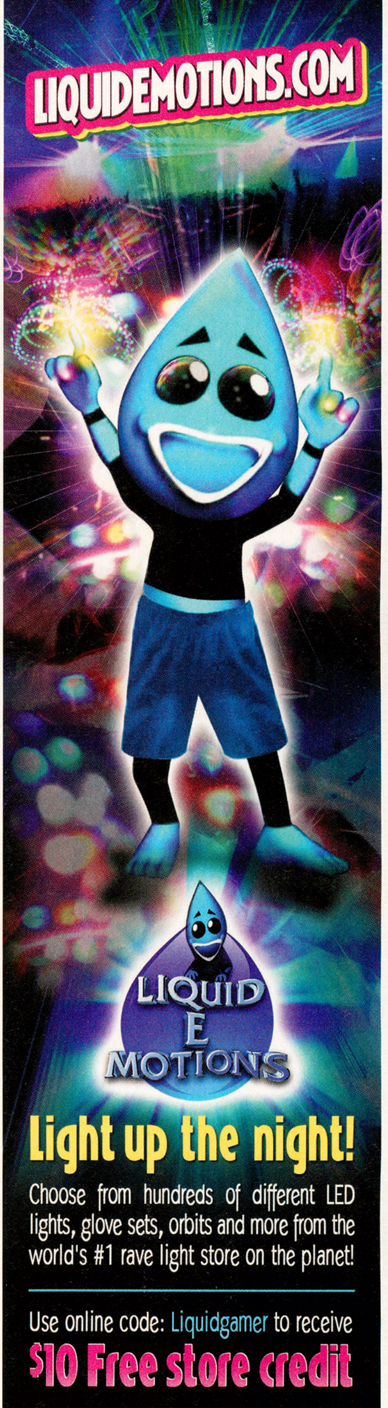


Original

Set the orientation of the shape.



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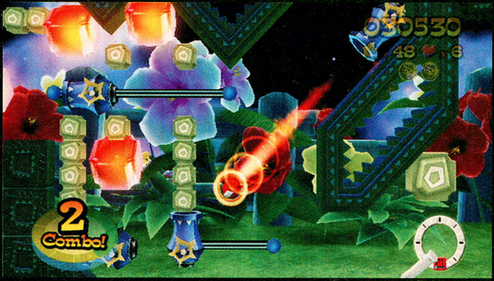
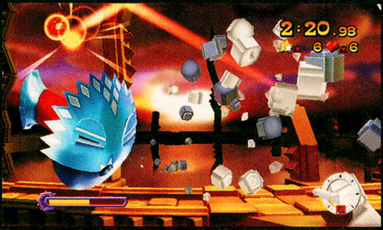
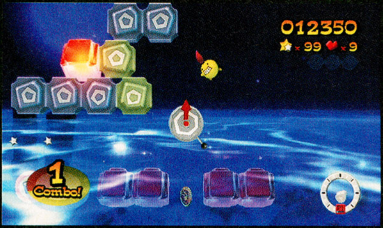
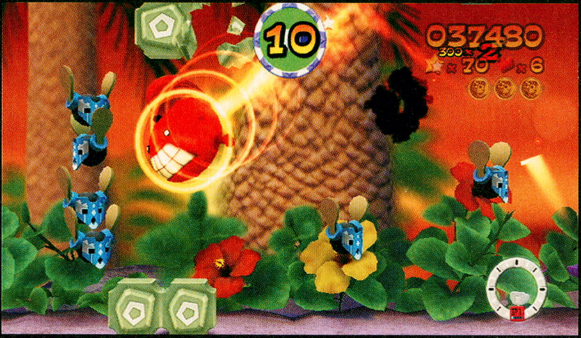






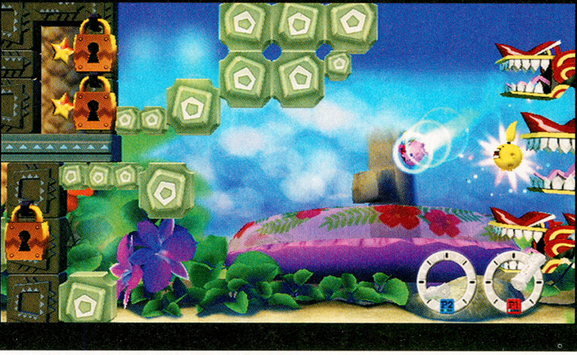
FLINGSMASH

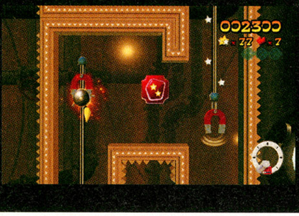
Take a swing, go for a fling



TROPICAL SUTHON ISLAND was a place of sun and fun until the evil Omminus invaded. Now it's up to you—along with the ball-shaped guardians of the island, Zip and Pip—to knock the villain back to where he came by smashing through everything in your path. Essentially a hybrid of tennis, pinball, and side-scrolling platforming, FlingSmash allows players to send Zip or Pip (or both in two-player mode) flying in any direction by swinging a Wii Remote equipped with the required Wii MotionPlus accessory. As you do so you'll crash through blocks, grab bonus-point icons, and collect keys and coins that allow you reach new areas. Like in pinball, there are numerous gimmicks in each stage: propellers that push your heroes around, cannons that launch them across the screen, and power-ups that increase your characters' size or split them for multiball-style play. In some stages the properties of the characters even change; in the third world, for example, Zip and Pip get cursed and turned into iron, making them slower and heavier but more powerful and giving them magnetic capabilities. At the end of each of the game's eight worlds you'll face off against a boss to further challenge your skills; one boss wears a shield that you must maneuver around to score a hit, whereas another will push you into a pit unless you avoid its charge. The better you perform, of course, the higher you'll score; do well enough in each stage, and you'll unlock bonus levels and multiplayer minigames (both competitive and cooperative). —**CHRIS H.**

Wii PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **ARTOON**
RELEASE: **SUMMER 2010**





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PG-13 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED
SOME MATERIAL MAY BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 13
EPIC BATTLE SEQUENCES AND SOME SCARY IMAGES
Bonus Material/Trailer Not Rated.
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS
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EPIC BATTLE SEQUENCES AND SCARY IMAGES
Bonus Material/Trailer Not Rated.
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING
PG-13 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED
SOME MATERIAL MAY BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 13
INTENSE EPIC BATTLE SEQUENCES AND FRIGHTENING IMAGES
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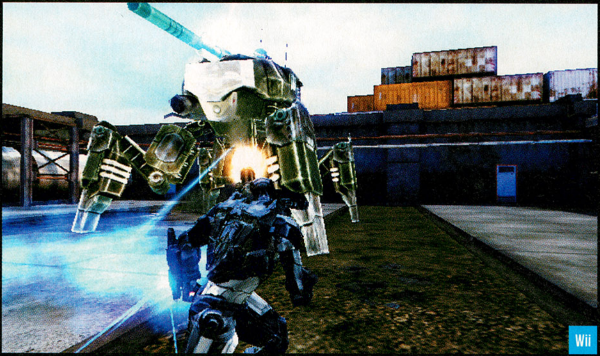
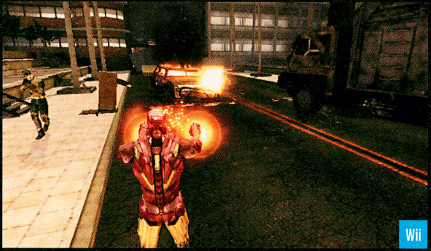


IRON MAN 2

Ironing out the previous games' kinks



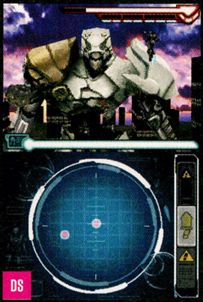
WE'RE NOT GOING to claim that the Wii and DS versions of Iron Man 2 will be the exceptions to the rule about licensed games being bad. But we will admit that our hands-on time with the two games has made us optimistic. Certainly, it helps that The Conduit developer High Voltage Software is tackling the Wii version, meaning you can expect fairly extensive controller customization and some impressive graphical touches (the explosions and Iron Man's shininess are particular standouts).

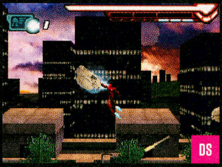
Gameplay-wise, Iron Man 2 on Wii is a more focused experience than the lackluster original. Much of the game takes place on the ground, with Iron Man and his well-armed buddy War Machine running around and blasting both baddies and random objects in the environment. In the first level we played, enemy soldiers from Advanced Idea Mechanics (AIM) have infiltrated Tony Stark's compound in an attempt to steal Tony's AI assistant JARVIS, and it's up to Iron Man to stop them. While following the onscreen compass to the objective, we shot enemies with repulsors (Iron Man's primary weapon) by pointing the Wii Remote at the screen and tapping A, and with rockets (the secondary weapon) by pulling B. While we stuck to these two weapons for the majority of our play test, we did cycle through some others by pressing up or down on the Control Pad. If you prefer a more hands-on approach, you can dispatch foes by swinging the Nunchuk for a melee strike. Or you could use environmental objects to your advantage: press the + Button to scan things, which gives you information. Scan a billboard, for example, and you get the hint that blasting it will cause it to fall and crush the enemies standing below it.

In addition to the ground-based action, Iron Man 2 has on-rails flying-centric levels. You use the Control Stick to dodge, and point at enemies with the remote then tap A or B to shoot them. As in the ground-battle levels, it helps to lock on to foes by holding Z.

Naturally, the Griptonite-developed DS version of Iron Man 2 provides a different experience. For one, it's a side-scrolling action game with some enormous bosses, such as Crimson Dynamo. And unlike its Wii sibling, the DS version features two distinct gameplay styles for Iron Man and War Machine. As Iron Man, you move with the Control Pad, and press Y to punch, B to jump, A to shoot, and X to unleash special attacks. As War Machine, however, you move in all directions with the Control Pad, and direct your armaments with the stylus (à la Geometry Wars: Galaxies).

It seems that Sega is addressing most if not all of the criticisms of the first Iron Man titles for Wii and DS; we'll find out the results when the games are released to coincide with the film this spring. —**JUSTIN C.**





[Left] The bosses can be quite imposing. It's a good thing War Machine has plenty of weapons.

PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE (Wii)/GRIPTONITE GAMES (DS)**
Wii DS
RELEASE: **MAY 2010**

RIVER CITY SOCCER HOOLIGANS

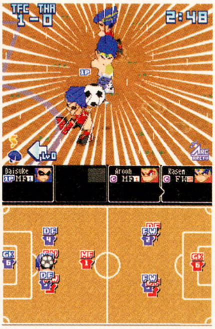
Kunio brings the beautiful game stateside.

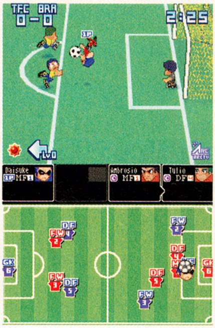
If Renegade, Super Dodge Ball, and River City Ransom inspire fits of reverie, you're likely a fan of Japan's long-running Kunio-Kun game series. You could be forgiven for not knowing it, though; Americanized Kunio games usually obscure their pedigree. Continuing this tradition, Aksys will bring Arc System Works's latest to the States as River City Soccer Hooligans. (Not to worry; though his name has been excised from the title, Kunio survives localization this time.)

Naturally, this is soccer Kunio-Kun style, so expect the standard assortment of hijinks: cartoonish fisticuffs, overpowered special moves, and environmental wildcards. League play puts players in control of River City FC as they fight (literally) toward victory in the World Hyper Cup (yes, *hyper*). Practice and exhibition modes offer a bit more control (team selection, weather conditions, etc.). In-match achievements (e.g., score a hat trick), unlockables (items can be gifted to teammates to affect their performances), and wireless multiplayer round things out.

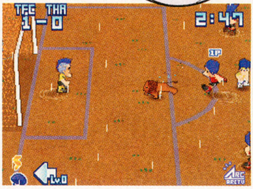
Hands-on time with a preview build proved somewhat rough (the 3-D implementation is dubious, and locking control to a single footballer makes play somewhat passive), but here's hoping Kunio fans can rejoice when the final product hits shelves. —PATRICK C.

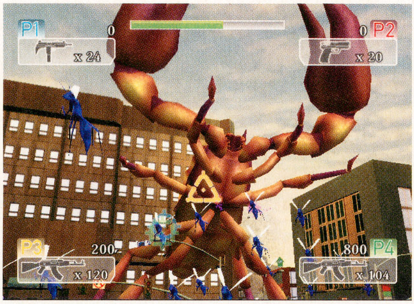
DS PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES** DEVELOPER: **ARC SYSTEM WORKS**
RELEASE DATE: **MAY 2010**





[Below] If you don't like lions running across the soccer pitch, this may not be the game for you.





300
Press Ⓐ to join
Press Ⓐ to join

ATTACK OF THE MOVIES 3D

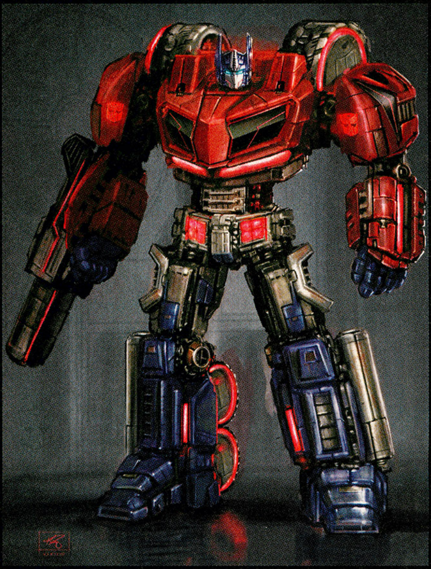
A third dimension adds depth to Majesco's light, quick-triggered shooter.

Inspired by sci-fi action films but not adapted from a specific title, Attack of the Movies 3D drops you into monster-infested worlds and gives you nothing but a Wii Remote to shoot your way out. As many as four players can drop in and out at any time as the game guides you through six scenes. You may have just a few seconds to blast away at a swarm of enemies before the camera turns at whiplash speed to reveal another threat, and then another. The optional 3-D feature makes close enemies and obstacles appear to be right on top of you, like the giant scorpion in the Insect Invasion level that reaches through the screen with snapping claws, or the asteroids that tumble into your path in Cosmic Combat. Other scenes include the *Terminator*-esque Robot Rebellion and an underwater level in which you trade in your guns and lasers for harpoons. Though the camera is locked on rails, the path it takes through the environments changes when you replay a scene, as do enemy attack patterns. The game will ship with four pairs of traditional red-and-blue-lens 3-D glasses, so you and three friends can fight for survival in style. —GEORGE S.

Wii PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO** DEVELOPER: **PANIC BUTTON**
RELEASE: **JUNE 2010**

TRANSFORMERS: WAR FOR CYBERTRON—AUTOBOTS/ DECEPTICONS

Whose side are you on?



LIKE THE PREVIOUS Transformers games for the Nintendo DS, the handheld version of Transformers: War for Cybertron comes in two flavors—Autobots and Decepticons. There's some crossover between the two, but the Autobots version—in which the pre-Prime Optimus wants to save Cybertron from Megatron, who's seeking to restore the planet to its former glory—is set before the Decepticon version on the Transformers timeline.

Despite having different narrative perspectives and characters (there are even a few DS-exclusive Transformers), the two versions have the same gameplay: you walk around with the Control Pad, jump with B, strike with X, shoot with Y, and lock on to opponents with L. There is some strategy to the combat, however; each enemy has a specific weakness you can exploit by using the appropriate attack. For example, some baddies are weak to melee attacks, as indicated by a blue square over their heads. Others are weak to lasers (indicated by a yellow triangle), so you can use weapons such as Autobot Air Raid's laser gun to take them out. Still others require heavier armaments to damage them (symbolized by a red circle).

To cover your bases, you can choose two Transformers to take with you on each mission. A quick tap of the A Button swaps characters—in this case, the heavy Grimlock replaces the flyer Air Raid. Not only does that allow you to take down enemies susceptible to heavy attacks, but it also allows Air Raid to regenerate his health and energy. Your opponents can throw a wrench into your plans, though, as they can sometimes change weaknesses on the fly. (In a pinch, you could use Air Raid to take down foes with red-circle icons over their heads, but it would take longer.)

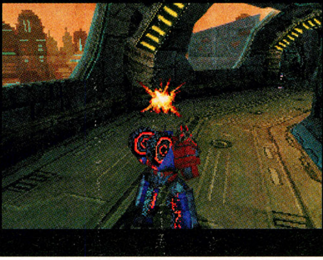
But what would a Transformers game be without transforming? You can transform at any time by tapping the Autobot or Decepticon logo on the touch screen. Each character's vehicle form has its benefits, especially during the puzzle-solving sections. For instance, let's say you press a button to bring down a force field, and you have a certain amount of time to get to your goal before the force field goes back up. You could drive to your goal, relying on the roads available to you. Or you could fly directly to the goal, bypassing all potential road hazards. But don't think flyers have all the advantages: the tanklike Grimlock (he's not a dinosaur in this precartoon era) can smash through walls, whereas light characters such as Bumblebee can find shortcuts by slipping through low openings.

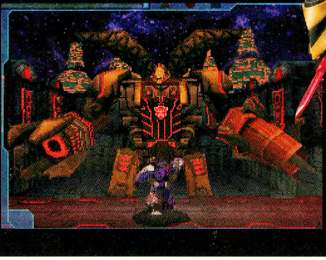
In addition to the single-player campaign, War for Cybertron allows up to four players to go head-to-head in deathmatch, capture the flag, and some as-of-yet-unnamed multiplayer modes via local wireless. —**JUSTIN C.**

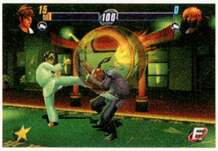
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: VICARIOUS VISIONS
DS **RELEASE: JUNE 2010**

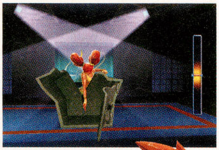
Roll Out

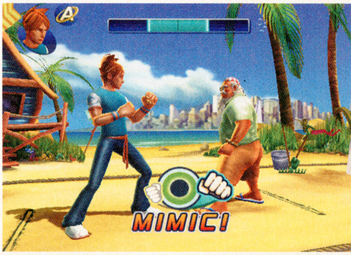
Toys are an integral part of the Transformers experience, so it makes sense that toy company Hasbro would release toys based on Transformers: War for Cybertron. Expect to see figures based on the War for Cybertron versions of Optimus, Megatron, and Bumblebee later this year.

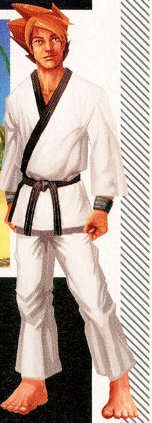










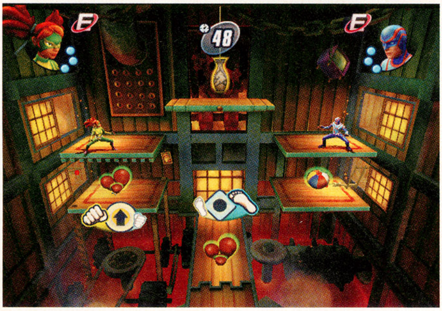


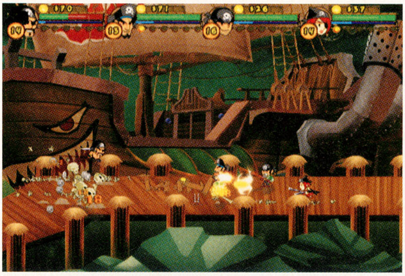
ALL STAR KARATE

Sweep the leg!

Whereas the All Star Cheer Squad series sought to represent competitive cheerleading somewhat accurately, All Star Karate takes a more over-the-top tack. In this game, you are a youngster who defends an old man from a gang of ninjas. After the skirmish, the old man—who just happens to be a karate master—takes you under his wing and trains you in the martial arts. Instead of waxing on and off *Karate Kid*-style, however, you're thrown right into karate training. You punch by gesturing with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk (or with two remotes) in the direction indicated onscreen. Kicking works similarly to punching, except you hold B or Z while swinging the controllers. In addition to routines in which you're scored based on timing and accuracy, All Star Karate features one-on-one sparring, as well as minigames such as using a wooden sword to deflect ninjas and their throwing stars (though the wooden-sword minigame is playable only if you're using the Wii MotionPlus accessory). —JUSTIN C.

Wii **PUBLISHER:** THQ **DEVELOPER:** BLITZ GAMES
RELEASE: MAY 2010



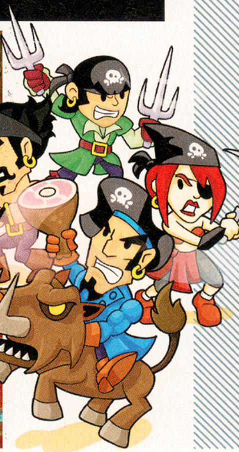


PIRATES PLUND-ARRR

Monsters and mayhem rule the high seas in Majesco's four-player fighter.

The angled-view, 2-D beat-'em-up hasn't been very well represented since its heyday in the early '90s, but Majesco is betting on a comeback with Pirates Plund-Arrr. Four players lead a gang of scalawags on a rampage through both piratey and not-so-piratey locations (such as a swamp, an Aztec temple, and a haunted village) in an effort to recover the Sceptre of Power from knave Rudebelly. Along the way, they slice through 40 types of enemies and gain a bounty of XP that leads to advanced levels and pirate upgrades. Blackbeard and Davy Jones never had to fight one-eyed ogres, skeletons, or zombies, but the game forgoes historical accuracy for pure slashing and swashbuckling action. Participants wield dozens of weapons, including swords and ham hocks, and occasionally catch a ride from a foe-flattening wild boar. They can also pick up and throw objects and enemies. The battle for booty begins this spring. —GEORGE S.

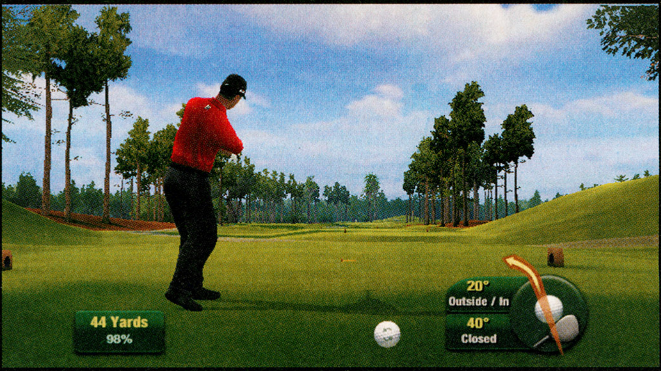
Wii **PUBLISHER:** MAJESCO **DEVELOPER:** BOOMZAP
RELEASE: MAY 2010

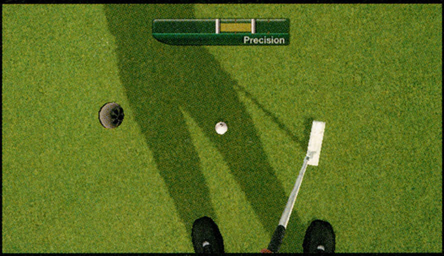


Pillage, plunder, rifle, and loot your way through varied locales on your way to claim your booty.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 11

Eye of the Tiger





237 Yards
86%
3°
Outside / In
9°
Open

37 Yards
100%
12°
Outside / In
19°
Closed

THE PAST FEW months haven't been the greatest for ol' Tiger, but at least this year's version of the game bearing his moniker looks like a winner! Building on the success of its stellar predecessor, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 uses the Wii MotionPlus accessory to introduce two new swing types that imbue the experience with even greater authenticity. The first is called Advanced Plus. Whereas last year's swing mechanic measured only the rotation of your wrists, Advanced Plus also reads the angle at which you come down on the ball, and sends it flying off the tee in the corresponding direction.

The second swing type—Tour Pro—adds another layer of depth by detecting the point at which you make contact with the ball. To accomplish this, it utilizes a first-person perspective that gives you complete 1:1 control over your club. The realism of the Tour Pro swing was evidenced by my first shot, which I shanked to the left so violently that it probably concussed some poor bystander in the gallery. The key to straightening it out, I was subsequently informed, is to look down at the floor as you line up your shot, and find a point of reference (an EA representative even suggested using a real golf ball); you want to get your hand back to that spot as you swing through. Heeding that advice, I slowly but surely improved my game. Plus, after each shot, an onscreen graphic shows you the angle and rotation of your swing, as well as where you made contact with the ball so you can make the necessary corrections. All in all, it feels pretty amazing, and you can immediately tell the difference from last year's title. I don't think any sports game has so convincingly replicated the real thing, and in the case of golf, that means equal measures of hair-pulling frustration and immense satisfaction.

The other big addition this year is the Ryder Cup. The famed event pits 12 of the greatest golfers from the United States against their European counterparts. You play the role of captain (using either a real-life pro or your created golfer from Career mode), and your performance affects the Team Pride meter, which can boost the chances of your AI partners playing well. Up to four people can compete in the Ryder Cup in any configuration (two-on-two, three-on-one, etc.), with the AI rounding out the rest of the field. No word yet on whether this particular event will be playable online, but given how complete the rest of the package looks, we're optimistic.

—STEVE T.

PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
Wii **DEVELOPER:** EA TIBURON
RELEASE: JUNE 2010

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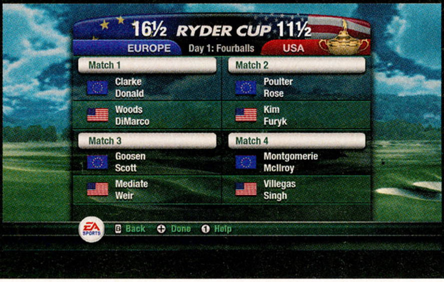
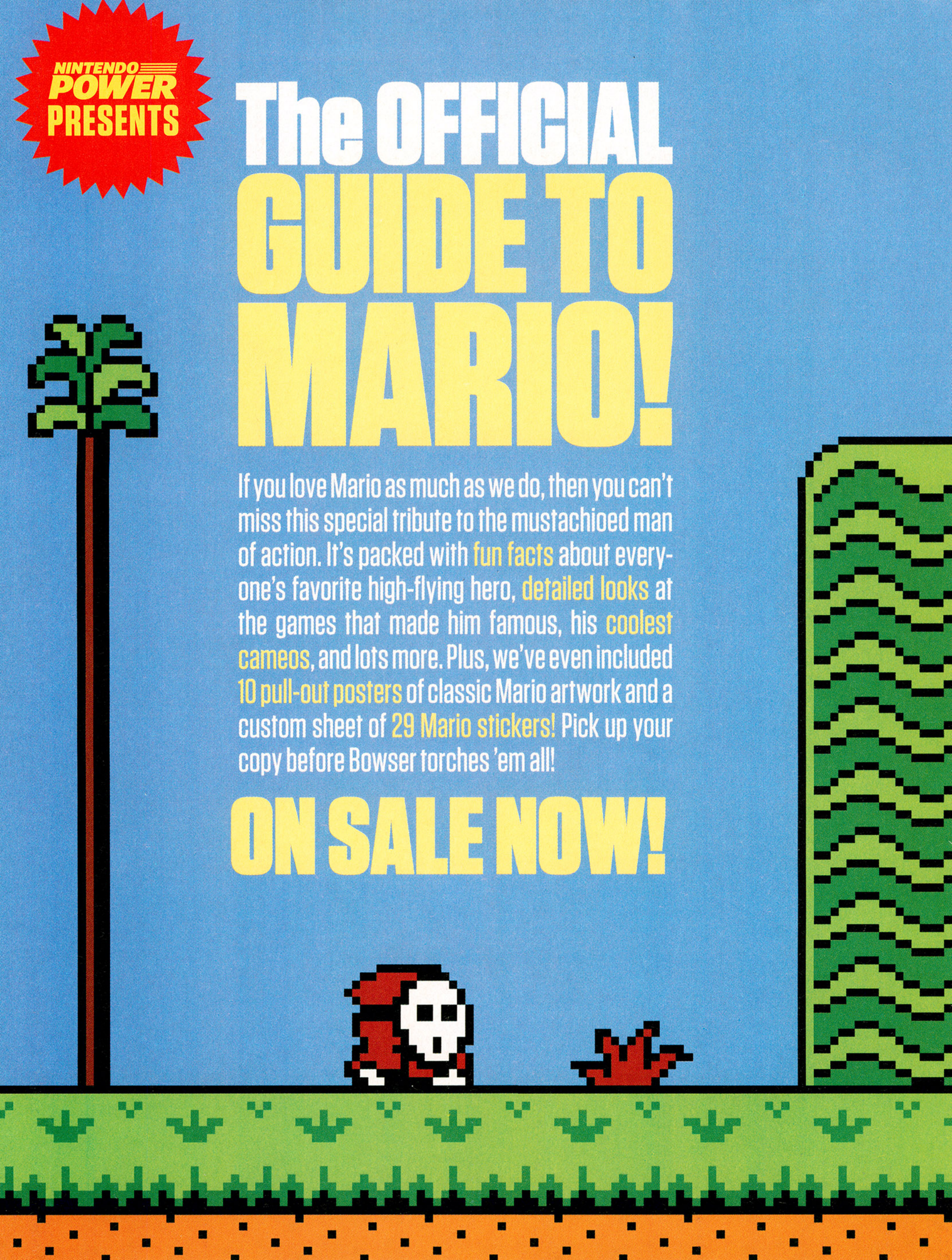


16½ RYDER CUP 11½
EUROPE Day 1: Fourballs USA

Match 1	Match 2
Clarke Donald	Poulter Rose
Woods DiMarco	Kim Furyk

Match 3	Match 4
Goosen Scott	Montgomerie McIlroy
Mediate Weir	Villegas Singh



NINTENDO POWER PRESENTS

The OFFICIAL GUIDE TO MARIO!

If you love Mario as much as we do, then you can't miss this special tribute to the mustachioed man of action. It's packed with fun facts about everyone's favorite high-flying hero, detailed looks at the games that made him famous, his coolest cameos, and lots more. Plus, we've even included 10 pull-out posters of classic Mario artwork and a custom sheet of 29 Mario stickers! Pick up your copy before Bowser torches 'em all!

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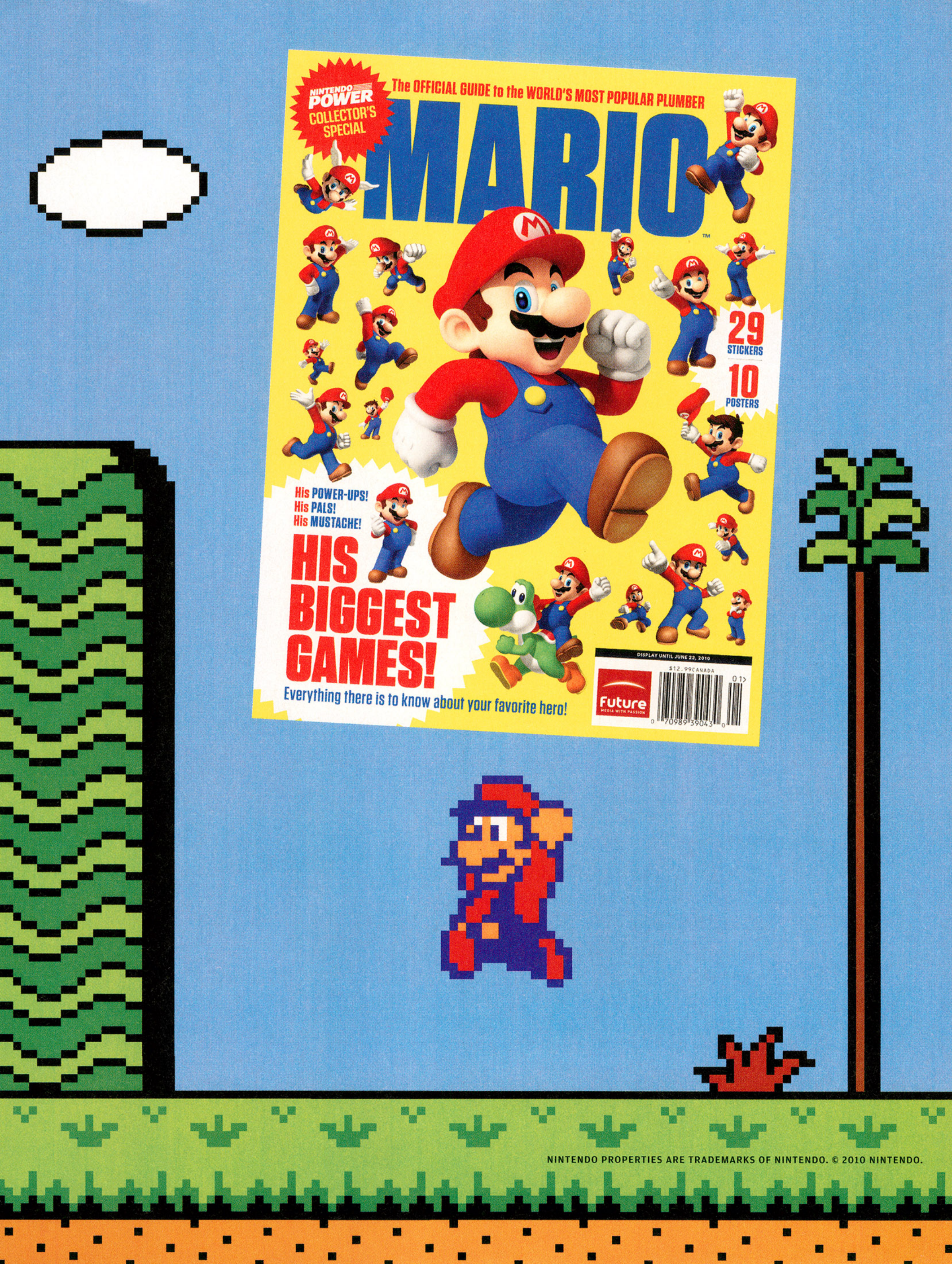
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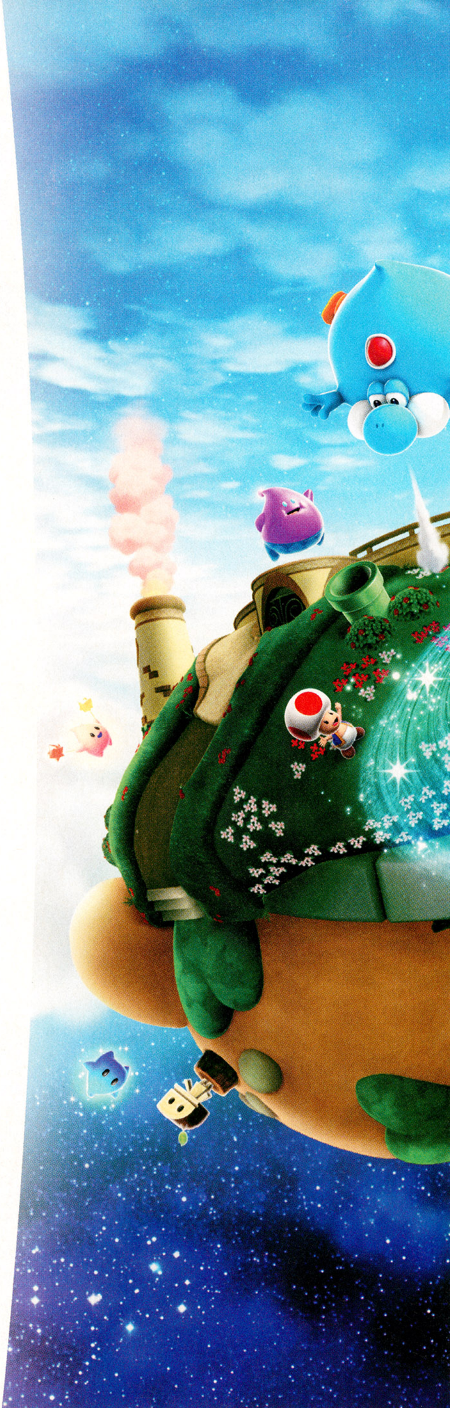
All-new worlds full of brilliant platforming and unrestrained, imaginative fun await in the Wii sequel the universe has been waiting for: Super Mario Galaxy 2.

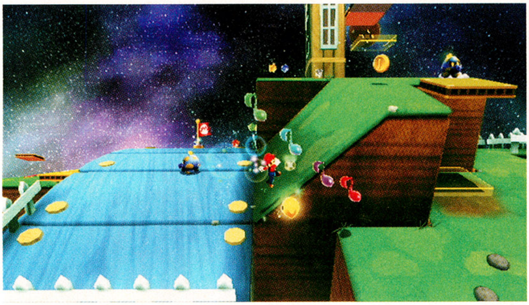
WELCOME BACK TO THE GALAXY!

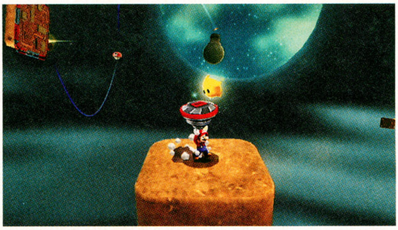


THE ORIGINAL Super Mario Galaxy, released in November 2007, was a thing of beauty. Not only was it one of the most visually impressive games on the Wii console, but it was a product of pure, unbridled creativity. There was something breathtaking around every corner and beyond every horizon, no matter whether you were flying through space, jumping between spherical planetoids, or facing a Koopa airship armada. Traditional platforming action mixed with unique gravity-based gameplay and a seemingly endless array of brilliant levels to prove that Mario—in fact, the entire platforming genre—was capable of providing gamers with experiences grander than they had ever dared dream.

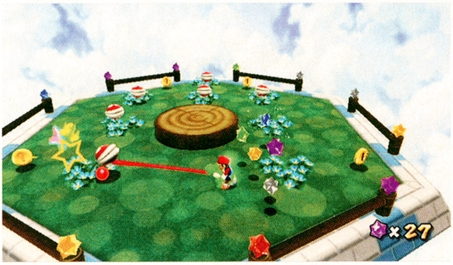
BY **CHRIS HOFFMAN**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO** RELEASE: **MAY 2010** Wii





[Above] Can you dig it? You can with Mario's new drill tool.



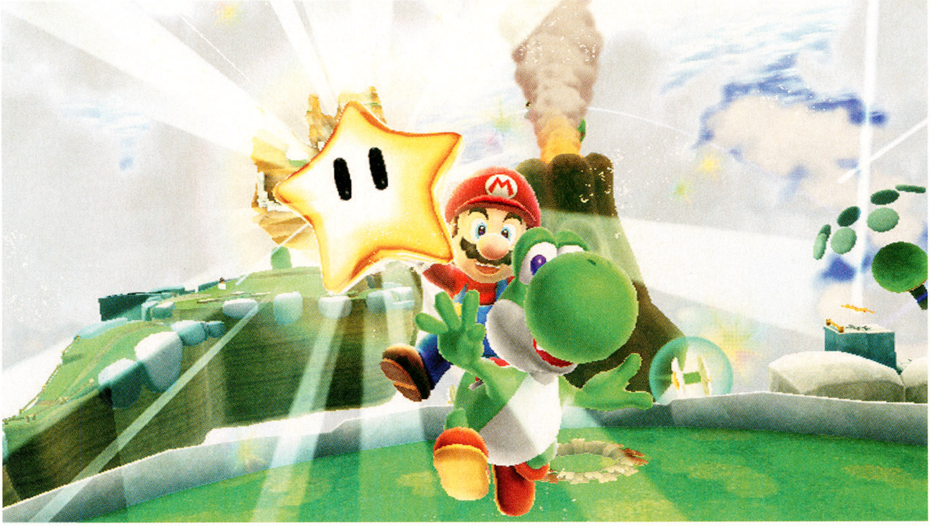
The first Super Mario Galaxy was so good that not only did Nintendo Power choose it as the top title of 2007—we proclaimed Galaxy to be the best game we've played in the past decade.

After creating such a groundbreaking, inventive title, a typical development team might be all out of good game concepts, but not the crew at Nintendo EAD Tokyo. As Mario creator Shigeru Miyamoto told Nintendo Power last year, the team actually had even more ideas that they weren't able to squeeze into the original Super Mario Galaxy. Luckily, those ideas (and presumably many more) gave rise to Super Mario Galaxy 2, and the game promises to be just as wondrous as its predecessor.

BLASTING OFF

The Super Mario Galaxy fundamentals haven't changed a lot, and that's a good thing. You'll still get to explore a diverse assortment of worlds—visiting planets of all shapes and sizes, launching through space, collecting colorful Star Bits, and more—while frolicking in and taking advantage of each heavenly body's gravitational rules. As players of the original Galaxy know, one of the game's joys is the fact that each location has its own gravity; many planetoids allow you a full 360 degrees of exploratory freedom that enables you to run from the top of the orb to the bottom and back again, and on others you can walk off the edge, only to find yourself unexpectedly standing on a wall. (On the other hand, some levels feature black holes that suck you to your doom if you lose your footing.)

You'll also still get to squash Goombas and other baddies by jumping on their heads with the A Button, or knock them silly by spinning into them via a shake of the Wii Remote or Nunchuk controller. Spinning

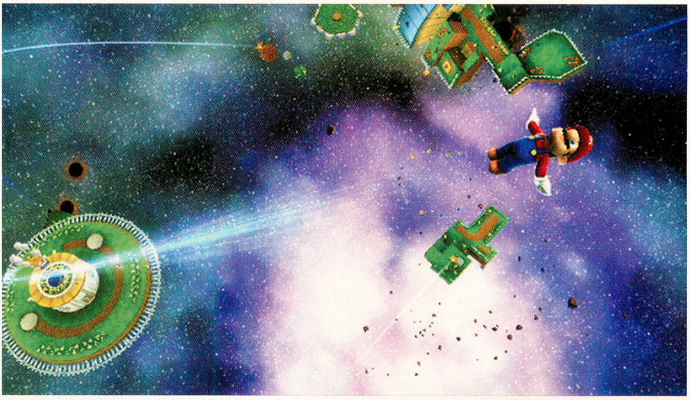


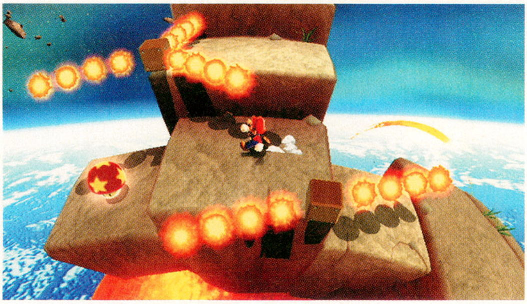
has other benefits, too—it adds an extra boost to your jump (great for reaching hard-to-get-to areas), and spinning in certain locations reveals hidden Star Bits or coins. Star Bits are great for when you need a little additional offensive power against enemies; by aiming at the screen with the Wii Remote controller and pressing B you can rain Star Bits down upon the bad guys.

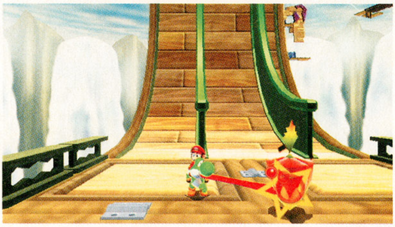
ENEMY-LICKIN' GOOD

What makes the sequel so compelling, though, is that it isn't just more of the same; there are tons of new gameplay elements. Perhaps the most exciting is the inclusion of Yoshi, Mario's dinosaurlike pal. If you come across an egg in your travels, all you have to do is break it open, and Yoshi's ready to go for a ride. (Convenient how he hatches already wearing shoes and a saddle, huh?) Like in past games featuring Yoshi, the green fella's tongue comes in very handy during Mario's quest, and you now have more control over it than ever before. By pointing at the screen with the Wii Remote and pressing B, you can make Yoshi stick out his tongue directly at that spot (provided you're pointing at something edible that's within range).

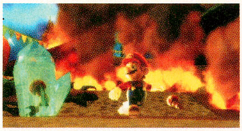
Naturally, you can make short work of enemies by eating them, but that's merely Yoshi's most basic ability. You know those pesky Hammer Bros.? They're back in Super Mario Galaxy 2, and Yoshi can actually ingest their hammers. You can also use Yoshi's appetite to solve simple puzzles—say, by consuming a Bullet Bill that's chasing after you, then spitting it back out to destroy the Bullet Bill launcher or to shatter an otherwise-impregnable barrier. Furthermore, Yoshi's tongue can



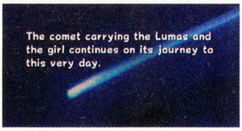




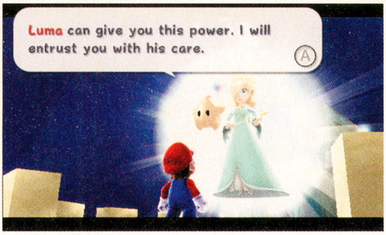
[Below] Yoshi is back and he's just as hungry as ever! One of his favorite snacks is the Dash Pepper; it lets him move incredibly fast and even run up walls. (Not available at your local grocer.)



"My mama!" "My mama!"



The comet carrying the Lumas and the girl continues on its journey to this very day.



Luma can give you this power. I will entrust you with his care.

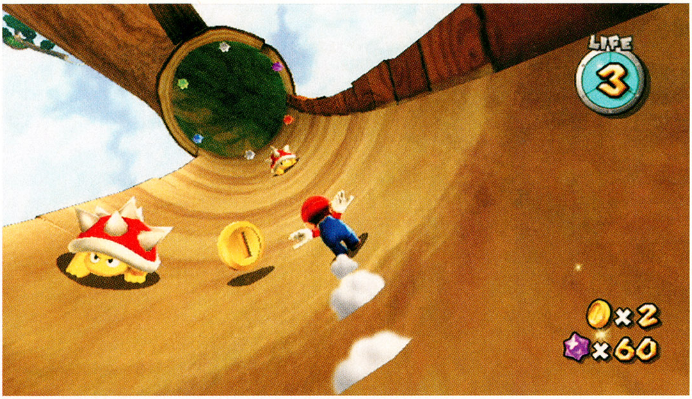
A Few Years Ago, in Some Galaxies Far, Far Away...

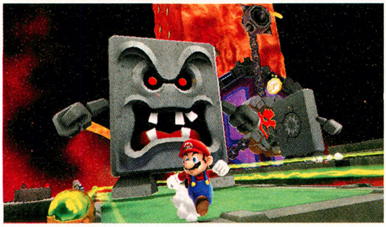
In the first Super Mario Galaxy, Bowser laid siege to the Mushroom Kingdom by harnessing the power of a passing comet. With his newfound might, Bowser was able to lift Peach's castle into space, and Mario came along for the ride. In the heavens, Mario encountered the mysterious Rosalina and her adopted family, the star-shaped Lumas (one of whom gave Mario his new spin ability). The comet Bowser had stolen power from was actually Rosalina's flying observatory, so it was up to Mario to reclaim the stolen stars and re-energize the observatory, which let Mario reach new galaxies and ultimately rescue Princess Peach. During his time on the observatory, Mario was able to read the story of how Rosalina overcame her sadness to become protector of the Lumas. The story for Galaxy 2 is still a secret as of press time, but we'd love to see Rosalina return.

pull blocks to create steps, and grab onto flower-shaped grapple points to perform aerial acrobatics. Equally cool is Yoshi's ability to eat various types of fruit to give himself temporary beneficial effects. The blue Blimp Fruit, for example, causes Yoshi to inflate, then float like a balloon to previously unimaginable heights, while the Dash Pepper allows Yoshi to run incredibly fast (even up slippery slopes or straight up walls), and the Bulb Berry lets him to cast a sphere of light that can be used in several as-of-yet-unrevealed ways.

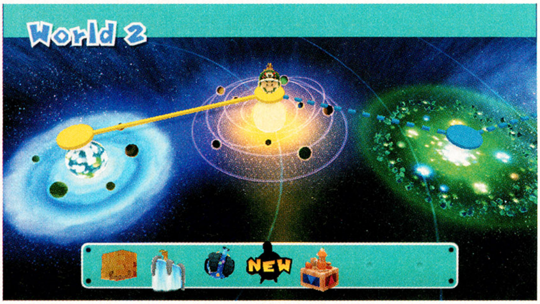
In addition to Yoshi, you can use several returning Mario power-ups, such as the Life Mushroom (which doubles your health); the Fire Flower (which temporarily allows you to throw fireballs by shaking the Wii Remote); the Rainbow Star (which grants a brief period of invincibility); and mushrooms that allow you to transform into Bee Mario, Boo Mario, or Spring Mario (which each have their own unique special abilities).

Mario can grab and use other items to help him on his way, too. One such item is a drill that allows Mario to burrow straight through whatever planet he's on. Say you're on a sphere with a fence around it that prevents you from getting to the other side; if you can find a drill, you can simply burrow





[Right] The new world map resembles that of 2-D Mario games.



Yo, Yoshi!

Believe it or not, Yoshi has been hanging out with and assisting Mario for nearly 20 years. Take a look at the role the sticky-tongued critter has played in some of Mario's adventures prior to Super Mario Galaxy 2.

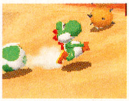
Super Mario World
(1991, SUPER NES)
Yoshi made his debut in Super NES launch title Super Mario World. Mario and Luigi could ride Yoshi and use his long tongue to eat enemies.

Super Mario Kart
(1992, SUPER NES)
You'd think Yoshi would be grateful after the Mario Bros. saved his homeland. Instead, Yoshi blasts them with Koopa shells.

Yoshi's Island: Super Mario World 2
(1995, SUPER NES)
Yoshi's Island told the secret history of Mario and Yoshi from when Mario was just a baby. This was the first platformer starring Yoshi as the main character.

Super Mario 64
(1996, NINTENDO 64)
Yoshi wasn't playable in Mario's first 3-D adventure, but if you could find him on top of Peach's castle, Yoshi would reward you with 100 extra lives.

Super Mario Sunshine
(2002, GAMECUBE)
Yoshi was rideable in 3-D for the first time in Super Mario Sunshine. Yoshi used his amazing gastric powers to eat fruit and spray enemies with the juice. Gross.



Super Mario 64 DS
(2004, NINTENDO DS)
When Super Mario 64 was remade for DS, Yoshi became a playable character. In fact, it's up to him to rescue Mario and help save the day.

New Super Mario Bros. Wii (2009, Wii)
Yoshi didn't appear in New Super Mario Bros. for DS, but he made his triumphant return in the Wii follow-up. Eating enemies (and friends) has never been more fun!

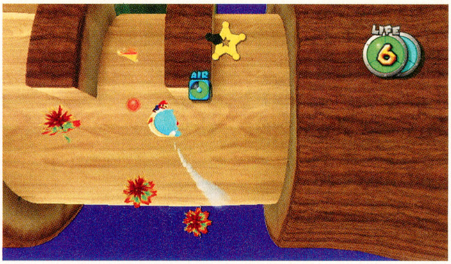
through the earth to bypass the fence. Other times you might dig through the ground, only to discover that the planet is hollow and the inside is full of coins or other goodies. In other instances the drill can be put to more clever use. What if there's a dirt pillar that's too tall to jump on top of? In that case, you can run to the opposite side of the planet and drill from directly beneath the pillar; you'll bore through the ground, straight through the pillar, and emerge on top of it to claim whatever riches or surprises await.

Another new ability involves slowing down time. When you activate this power the screen turns black-and-white and the world moves slower while Mario moves at his usual pace.

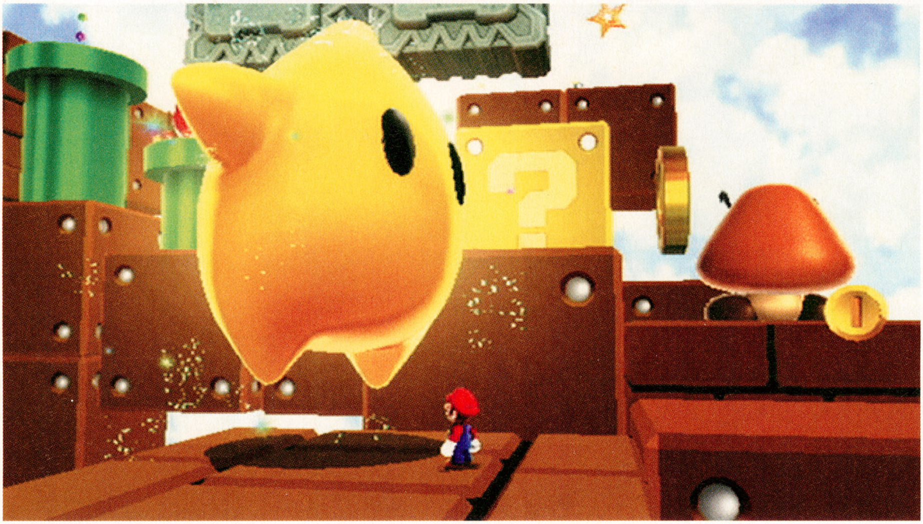
OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD ADVENTURE

As you can probably guess, you've got a good reason to put all of these skills and powers to the test. That's right—Bowser has kidnapped Princess Peach again, and Mario needs to rescue her. To do so, he'll have to collect Power Stars and Grand Stars, and that mission will take you through numerous galaxies (most containing multiple stages and stars). Unlike the first Super Mario Galaxy, there's no central hub world; instead, you'll access levels from a map similar to that of classic Mario titles. By collecting more stars you'll unlock new galaxies, each with their own themes and gimmicks.

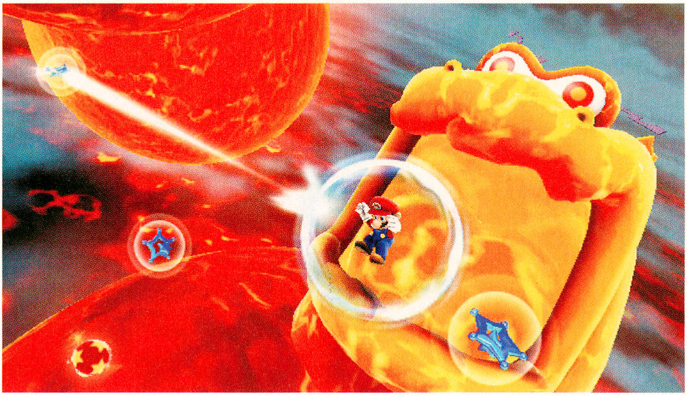
In the Sky Station Galaxy, for instance, you'll visit Yoshi's house and use familiar green warp pipes to travel from one part of a planet to another, then meet up with helpful Lumas that transform into Launch Stars that allow you to soar through the skies. You'll also encounter numerous moving platforms, including a series of train carts that revolve around a planetoid. Sticky goo covers the ground in some spots; you'll have to walk carefully if you don't want to get stuck as you cross the train tracks. At one point in the level you find a teleporter that warps you to a small optional arena in which you



[Below] Mario's not small; everything in the Supermassive Galaxy is huge! Where's a good Mega Mushroom when you really need it?



must defeat all the enemies within a time limit; succeed, and you'll earn an extra life. At the end of the level you'll encounter the PeeWee Piranha. Despite its name, the Piranha Plant variant—which is encased in a giant eggshell—is pretty big. After hitting the PeeWee Piranha three times in its glowing butt, the creature powers itself up, but three more hits finishes it off for good.



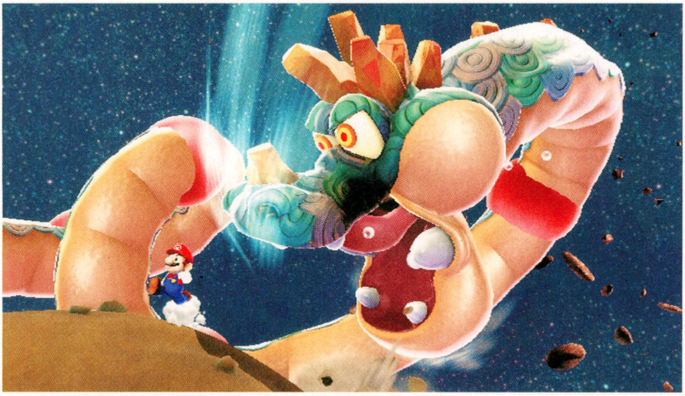
The Supermassive Galaxy offers challenges of a different sort. Perhaps an homage to Giant Land from Super Mario Bros. 3, the galaxy is true to its name. It's full of giant-sized scenery—huge ? Blocks, bricks, and pipes—plus monstrous enemies such as enormous Goombas, Koopas, Piranha Plants, and Wigglers. Though your primary focus will probably be not getting crushed by gargantuan Thwomps and the like, you'll want to stop and look around, too; on one small planetoid you'll make grass grow with every step you take, and if you cover the entire orb with foliage, you'll find a hidden Power Star.

Another standout level is the Upside Dizzy Galaxy, a 2-D stage with both regular gravity and reverse gravity, depending on where you're standing. Sometimes the type of gravity is attached to a moving platform; other times the gravity changes at will. There are even enemies that rely on gravity to defend themselves; when gravity is normal they're invulnerable, but when gravity gets reversed their soft underbellies are exposed for a good stomping. If you use the gravity to your advantage, you might even reach a secret pipe that leads to a junk-cleaning robot (who fans might remember from the first Super Mario Galaxy); if you accept his challenge and use a Fire Flower to burn all his crates within a time limit, he'll reward you handsomely.

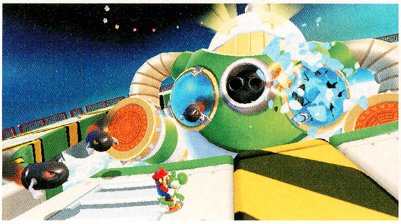
EVEN MORE TO EXPLORE

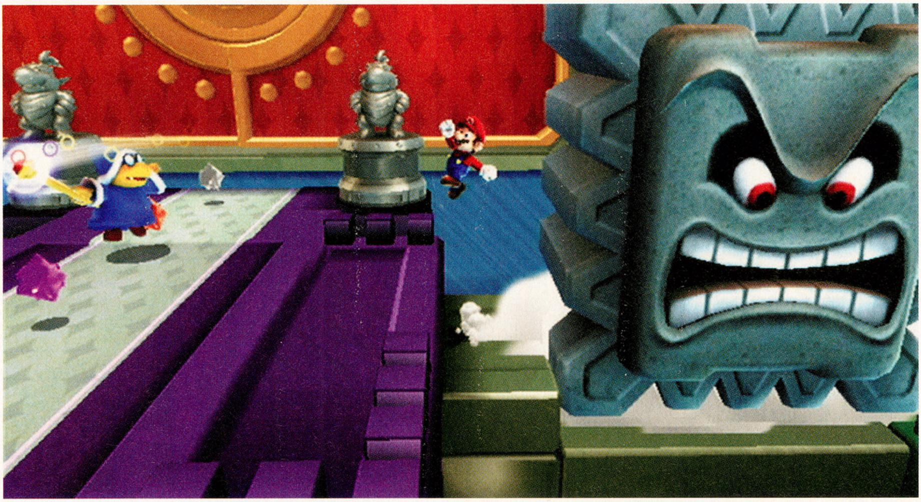
Meanwhile, in the Tall Trunk Galaxy, you'll ride Yoshi and use the Blimp Fruit to float to the top of a tall tree. The Blimp Fruit's power runs out fairly quickly, so you'll have to travel from one fruit to the next to make it to the top. From there you'll encounter what amounts to a humongous sideways log that's covered with platforms. The log has an unusual type of gravity; if you fall while negotiating the platforms, you'll simply spin around the log until you land on something solid. These peculiar physics allow for level design that's unlike anything you've seen before, and the result is a different type of mazelike environment that you must explore to collect the five Star Chips that form a Launch Star.

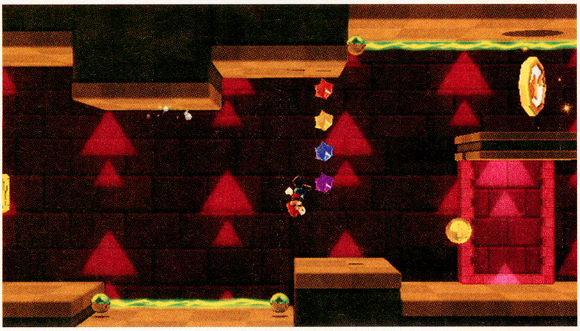
Other levels include the Spin-Dig Galaxy (where you'll use the drill to



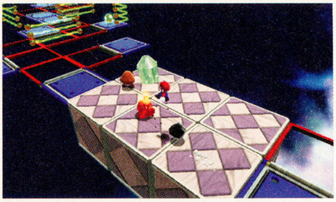
Super Mario Galaxy 2 features some awesome bosses. Gobbleguts [above] and the Mighty Malletoid [below] are only two of them.



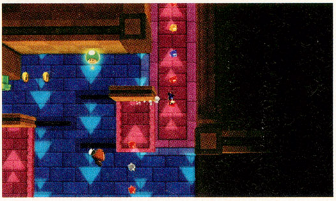




[Below] In the Flip-Swap Galaxy, spinning at the wrong time will move platforms and send you to your doom.



Colored arrows indicate which way gravity flows in the Upside Dizzy Galaxy.



reach new areas and battle a mech boss named Digga-Leg on a saucer-shaped planetoid), the Hightail Falls Galaxy (in which you'll ride Yoshi and use the Dash Fruit to navigate a series of wooden, rollercoasterlike obstacle courses), a haunted-house galaxy (where you'll face giant Boos and have to overcome skeletal creatures that dissolve the very ground Mario walks upon), and galaxies with ice and underwater themes.

Every galaxy features its fair share of problems for everyone's favorite plumber, but things get especially hairy when Bowser's troublemaking kid, Bowser Jr., shows up. In Bowser Jr.'s Fearsome Fleet stage you'll face off against the Mighty Malletoid, a hammer-wielding robot that can be defeated only by using Yoshi to spit Bullet Bills back at it. And in Bowser Jr.'s Fiery Flotilla stage you'll encounter a giant, elongated dragon named Gobbleguts. As the graphically impressive creature weaves its way through and around the planet you're standing on, you must hit its pink, pulsating weak spots while dodging its attacks.

Like in the original Super Mario Galaxy, there are plenty of levels with optional bonus challenges. Meandering comets again unleash some of the game's toughest stages, but this time you won't just wait around for the comets to come into range; instead, you'll gain access to them by acquiring Comet Medals within regular levels. After you grab enough medals, you'll be able to play levels such as the Flip-Swap Galaxy, a stage in which you must collect 100 purple coins within four minutes. Massive rolling balls and electric gates impede your progress, but the real twist is that the colored floor panels alternately rise or fall every time you use Mario's spin; the stage can be quite tricky if you don't plan your moves carefully.

GALACTIC GRANDEUR

Based on what we've played and seen so far, Super Mario Galaxy 2 appears to offer everything that players loved about its forebearer, and much more. The game looks visually stunning, and the levels we've discussed merely hint at the diversity you'll encounter as Mario continues his intergalactic quest. Even the two-player mode is said to be better than it was in the first game. Considering the astonishing quality of the original Super Mario Galaxy, it would take a very special game to surpass it—yet all indications point to Super Mario Galaxy 2 doing just that. We won't have to wait long to find out if that's the case; the game soars into stores on May 23.

We finally go hands-on with Metroid: Other M and begin to answer the big questions surrounding this year's most intriguing Wii game.

METROID MYSTERIES SOLVED

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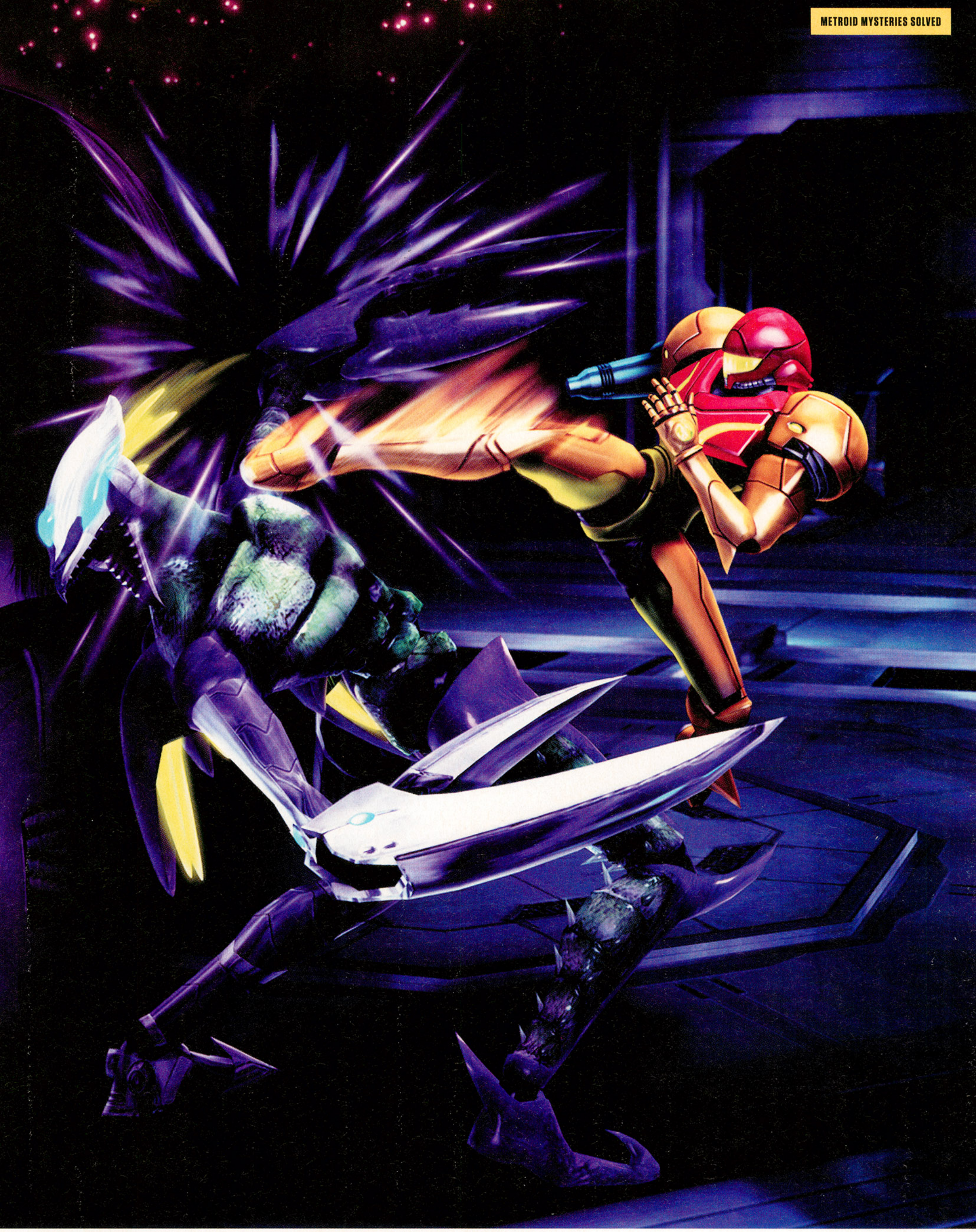
What's the story? pg. 65
What does Team Ninja bring to the table? pg. 66
Does it still feel like Metroid? pg. 67



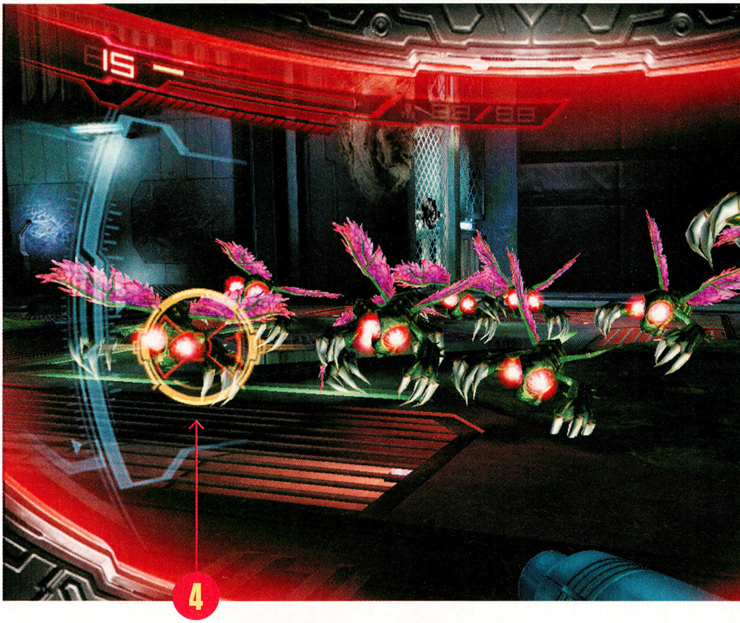
BY **STEVE THOMASON**

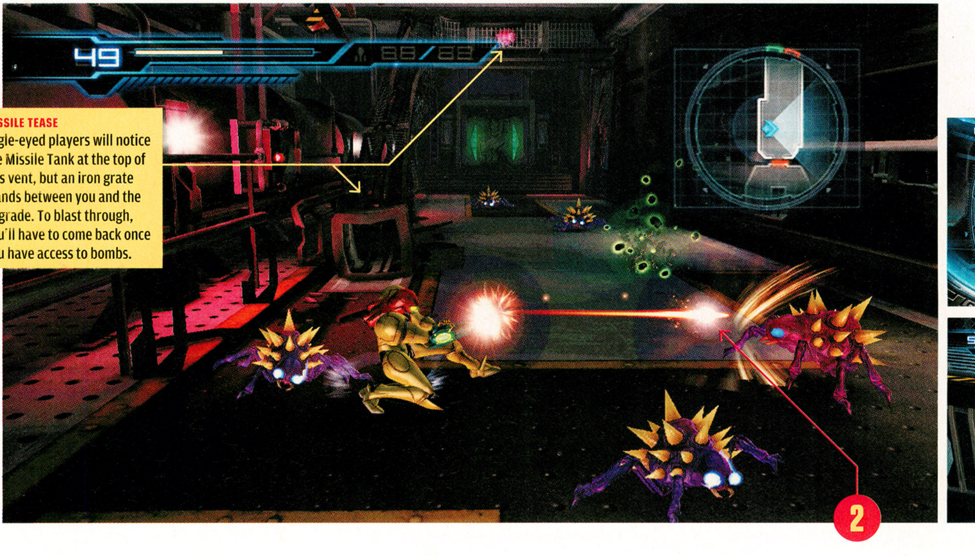
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO/TEAM NINJA** RELEASE: **JUNE 2010** Wii

How does the game play?

Last year's E3 debut trailer was all kinds of awesome, but it didn't give us a very good sense of how Other M would actually play. We had no idea what to expect going into our hands-on demo, and the first big surprise came when we were handed a Wii Remote controller sans Nunchuk. Yes, you play the game entirely with the Wii Remote, held sideways like an NES pad. (Nintendo wouldn't comment on the possibility of alternate control setups.) As a result, the core interface is pretty simple. You move Samus via the Control Pad, press the 1 Button to fire her arm cannon, and press the 2 Button to jump. The A Button rolls our heroine into her trademark Morph Ball. For the most part, the game unfolds from a fixed third-person perspective, similar to action games like Devil May Cry and Ninja Gaiden **(1)**. Targeting from this viewpoint is largely automatic, with Samus firing at whichever enemy is closest to her line of sight **(2)**. The end result comes across like a natural progression of the franchise's classic side-scrollers.

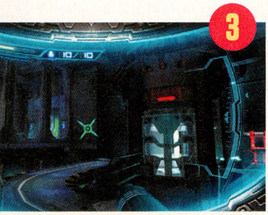
As hinted at in the debut trailer, you can also switch to a first-person view **(3)**. To do so, you simply point the Wii Remote at the screen. Unlike the Metroid Prime series, however, Other M doesn't allow Samus to move from this perspective. Instead, it feels more like the 3-D Legend of Zelda titles, with the intention of giving you a better look at your surroundings. You can lock onto items of interest—enemy weak points, control panels, etc.—by pressing the B Button **(4)**, then fire a missile with

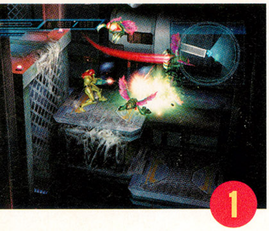




MISSILE TEASE
Eagle-eyed players will notice the Missile Tank at the top of this vent, but an iron grate stands between you and the upgrade. To blast through, you'll have to come back once you have access to bombs.

the A Button. It's worth noting that's the *only* way to launch missiles in this game, which makes for an interesting new risk-reward dynamic. Though missiles pack a heck of a punch, the immobility of first-person mode leaves you vulnerable. There's also a bit of awkwardness associated with the transition from first person to third person initially, but that dissipates with practice.





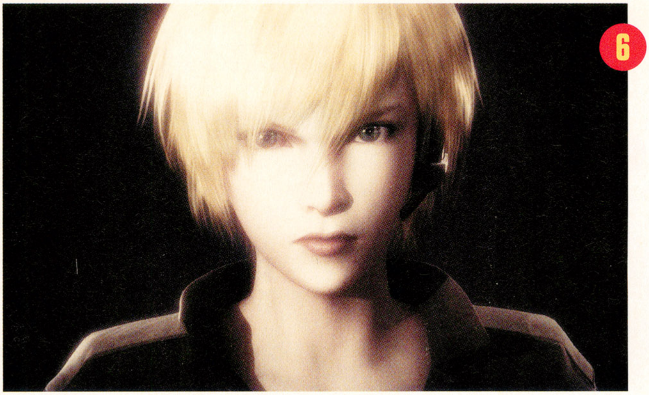
What's the story?

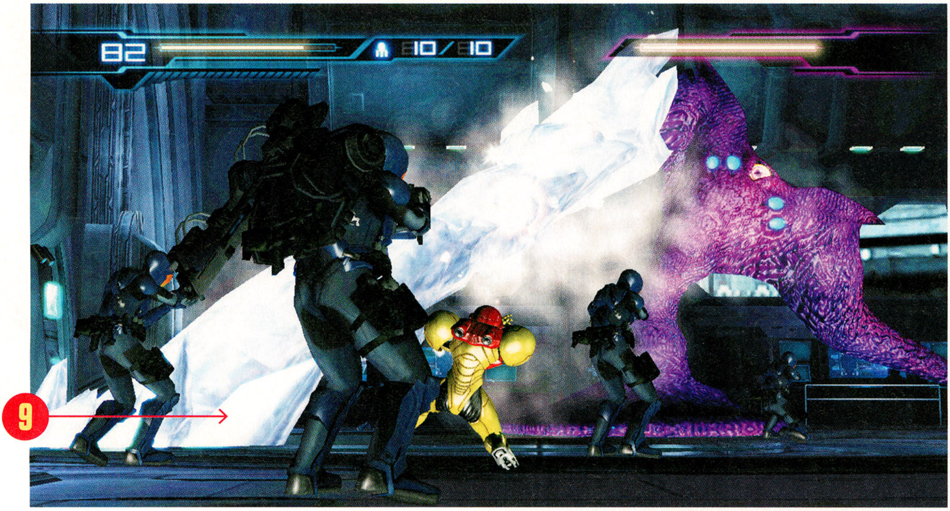
Super Metroid's memorable finale serves as the prologue for Other M, only this time it's rendered in stunning CG. For those unfamiliar with the 1994 Super NES classic, it culminates in a showdown between Samus and the nefarious Mother Brain. Our heroine is nearly defeated by her nemesis, only to be saved by a baby Metroid whose life she spared earlier in the adventure. The unexpected ally sacrifices itself to give Samus the power necessary to destroy Mother Brain once and for all. Other M seems to pick up soon afterward—we see Samus wake up in a hospital, where she comments that she's been "reliving tragic moments of her past."

After a quick tutorial, the game cuts to the bounty hunter piloting her trademark ship and implies that a considerable amount of time has passed when she reflects on the quiet days that followed, "until the space pirates and Metroids were but a faded memory." We're privy to these internal monologues from Ms. Aran throughout the demo, and they're usually characterized by a pervasive melancholy (which has us a bit concerned, to be honest). It seems the baby Metroid's death had a significant impact on Samus, as she refers to it often.

A distress signal interrupts our heroine's musings and leads her to a massive, seemingly abandoned vessel on the outskirts of the known galaxy. Once inside, she runs into a team of Galactic Federation Army (GFA) soldiers **(5)**, led by her former commanding officer Adam Malkovich. That's the same Adam whose personality served as the AI for Samus's shipboard computer in Metroid Fusion, providing strong evidence that Other M takes place prior to the events of that Game Boy Advance title. Though the exchanges between Malkovich and Samus are decidedly chilly, the latter decides to remain on-site and help the GFA investigate.

The frequent cut-scenes **(6)** and heavy emphasis on narrative represent a huge departure for Nintendo. The dialogue and voice acting in the demo were a bit stilted, but we remain intrigued by the big N's first attempt at this type of cinematic blockbuster.



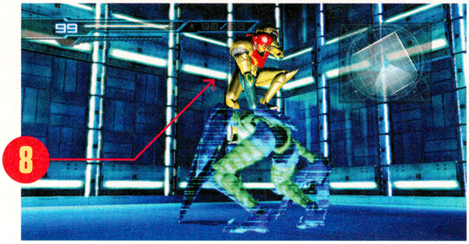


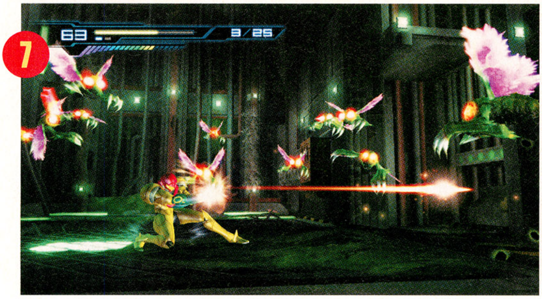
What does Team Ninja bring to the table?

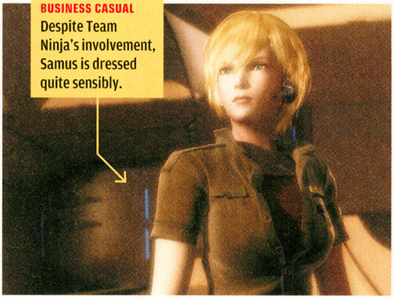
As previously reported, Nintendo is sharing development duties for Other M with Tecmo's Team Ninja, the folks behind the modern Ninja Gaiden efforts. Their influence is apparent as soon as you pick up the controller. Samus feels quicker and more nimble than ever, and her motions exhibit a familiar fluidity and grace. In other words, she moves a lot like Ninja Gaiden's Ryu Hayabusa. Even her running animation—she leans forward and takes short, rapid steps—recalls Tecmo's fleet-footed assassin.

Likewise, the action is far more brisk than in previous Metroid titles. Enemies attack in larger numbers than our heroine is accustomed to, and they tend to be pretty aggressive, often pouncing on Samus as soon as they notice her. That intensity is no doubt what led to the game's streamlined controls; you need to be quick on the draw when a dozen airborne Reos are swarming around you **(7)**.

What's more, Samus has added a couple of ninja-inspired moves to her arsenal. When a foe's attack is about to connect, tapping the Control Pad in any direction will trigger a stylishly executed dodge. The dexterous bounty hunter can also get up close and personal with certain adversaries **(8)**. While battling the demo's giant cyclopean boss, for instance, she can run up its body, stand on its head, and give it an eyeful of blaster at point-blank range. Once the monster has been sufficiently weakened, your GFA allies will ice its limbs with their freeze guns **(9)**, which is your cue to shatter the appendages with your missiles. All told, combat is fast, frenetic, and brutal without going so far as to seem out of place for the series.

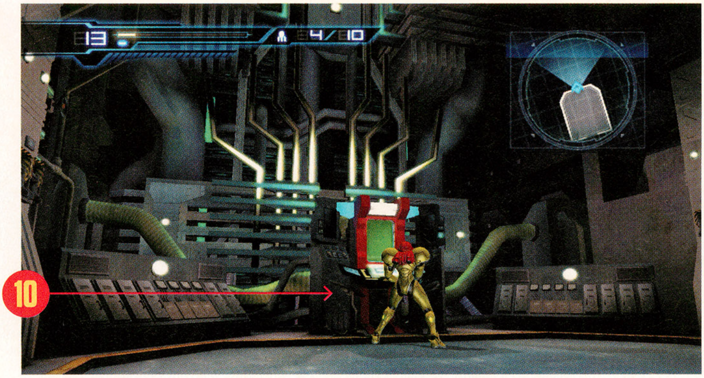






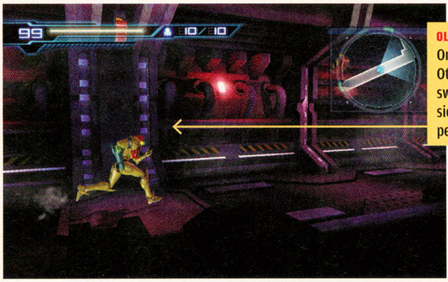
BUSINESS CASUAL
Despite Team Ninja's involvement, Samus is dressed quite sensibly.

Does it still feel like Metroid?

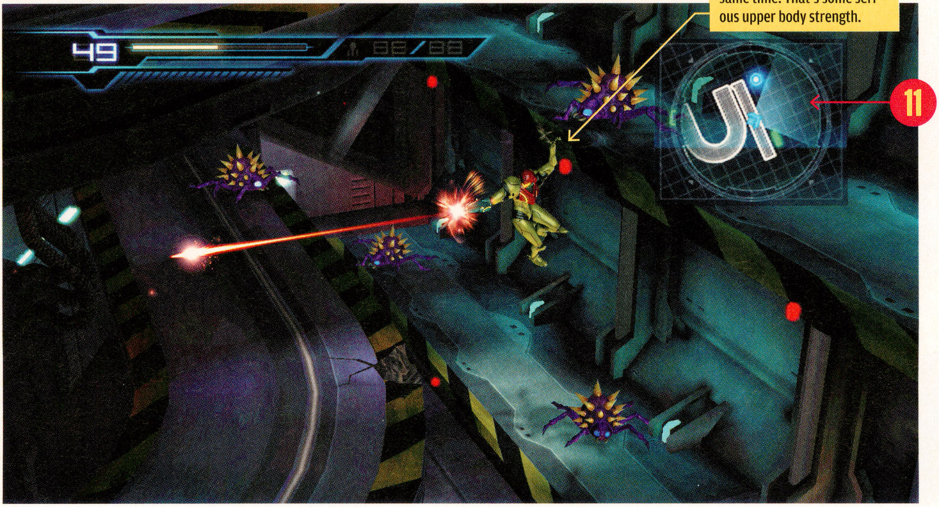


Absolutely. Though it ventures into new territory, Other M mindfully retains the essence of the series with its trademark brand of exploration and retraversal. During our demo, Samus is tasked with bringing the abandoned ship's electrical system back online **(10)**. Once she does, locked doors open and new areas become accessible, encouraging you to retrace your steps and poke around for goodies. Of course, some upgrades you can reach only once you've acquired certain abilities. In a welcome twist on series tradition, access to Samus's arsenal is initially limited not due to some malfunction or freak accident, but because she's under Adam's command and can't use a given weapon until he's authorized her to do so. Another interesting wrinkle: scanning your surroundings in first-person mode becomes a vital part of exploration in Other M. The default perspective purposely obstructs your view of certain nooks and crannies, as well as destructible elements like an air vent that leads to a hidden tunnel. Fortunately, a minimap in the upper-right corner of the screen **(11)** alerts you to nearby items (without giving away their exact locations).

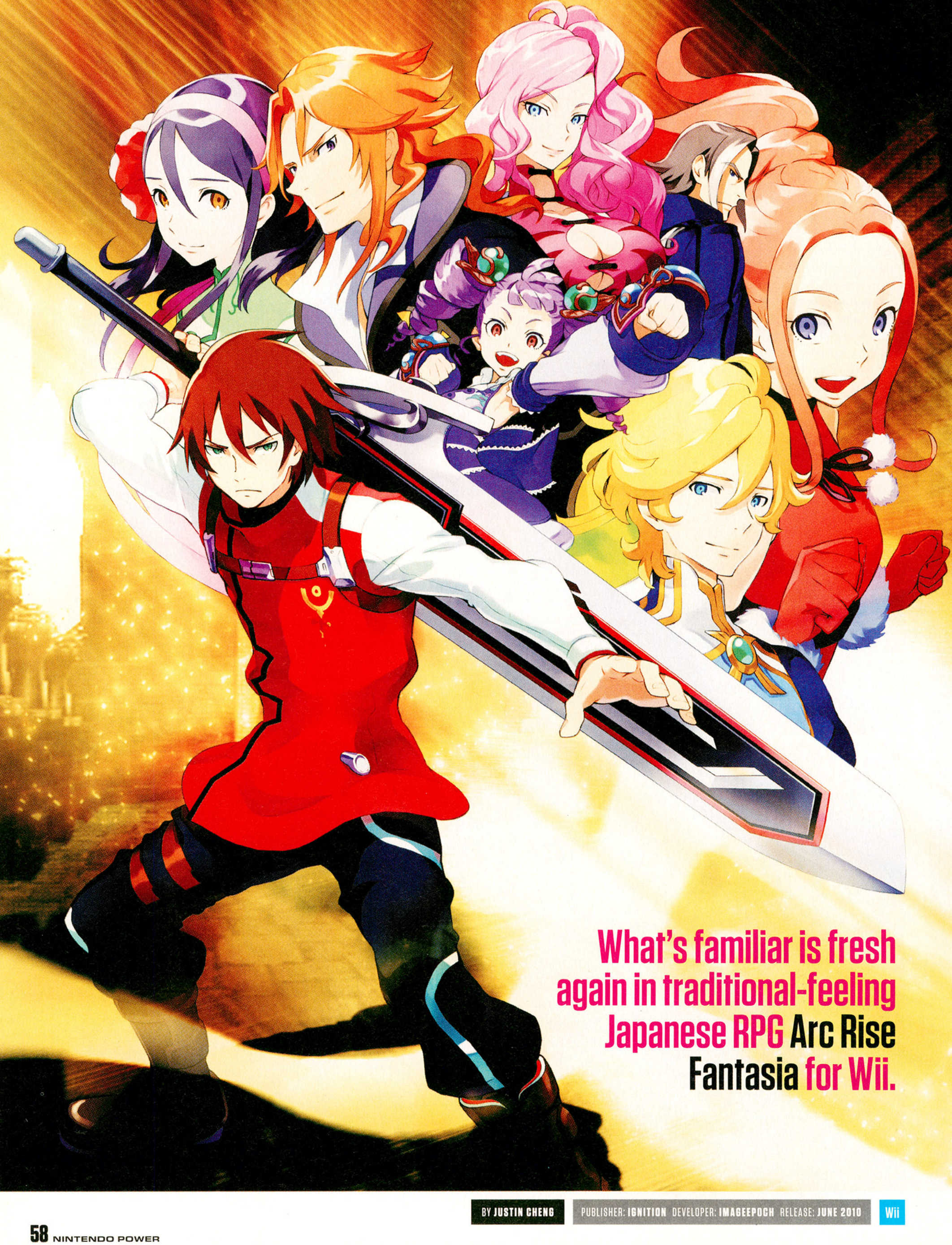
With the first few of our burning questions finally answered, we walked away from the Other M demo feeling extremely optimistic. Team Ninja's style mixes with the Metroid formula surprising well, evolving the series without reinventing it, just as Metroid Prime did. And as you may recall, that didn't turn out too badly.



OLD SCHOOL
Once in a while, Other M will switch to a classic side-scrolling perspective.



IRON WOMAN
Samus can hang from ledges and fire her arm cannon at the same time. That's some serious upper body strength.



What's familiar is fresh again in traditional-feeling Japanese RPG **Arc Rise Fantasia** for Wii.

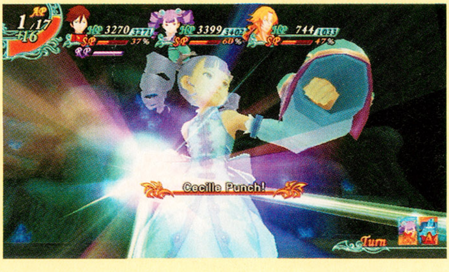
BY **JUSTIN CHENG**

PUBLISHER: **IGNITION** DEVELOPER: **IMAGEEPOCH** RELEASE: **JUNE 2010**

Wii

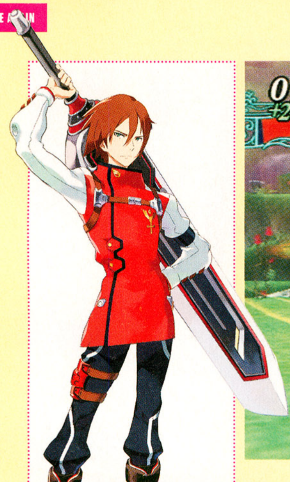
RISE AGAIN

CONSIDERING THE WIDE appeal of the Wii console and the multitude of voracious role-playing-game fans, it's peculiar that we have yet to see a traditional Japanese RPG on the system. Sure, there is a variety of other kinds of RPGs available on Wii—action-RPGs such as Muramasa: The Demon Blade or strategy-RPGs such as Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn—but nothing akin to a Final Fantasy or Dragon Quest. And it's this vacuum that developer Imageepoch (best known for its handheld titles Sands of Destruction and Luminous Arc) seeks to fill with Arc Rise Fantasia. "No one had been challenging the RPG genre for Wii in Japan," proclaims Imageepoch president Ryoei Mikage. "And we loved the idea of doing something people don't do—especially when it's risky—and we simply decided to do it."

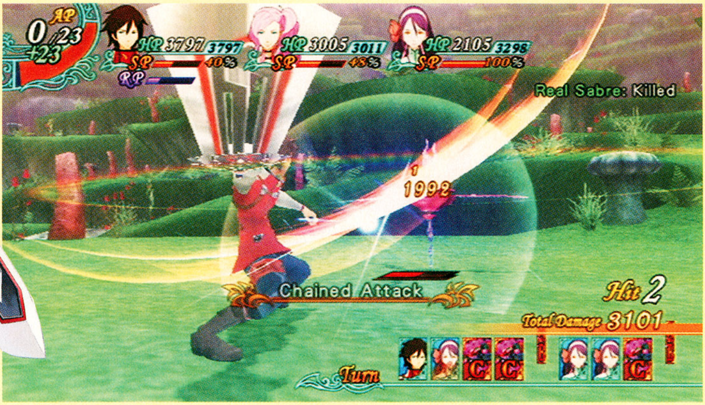


Thank goodness they did. As gamers who grew up playing classic JRPGs, we're glad to see the genre make a comeback. (Or see it come back again, we should say, as we first covered Arc Rise Fantasia over a year ago in Volume 238, before Ignition became the game's publisher.) Everything about Arc Rise Fantasia feels new yet comfortably familiar. Take the game's opening moments, for instance. L'Arc, a sword-swinging mercenary of the Meridian army, finds himself separated from his unit after being knocked off his airship while fighting a massive Feldragon. Once he and the critically wounded Feldragon hit the ground, the beast begins to glow, about to explode in a Felburst. Fortunately for L'Arc, a naïve young spellcaster named Ryfia intervenes (she's from the Turemilian Republic, enemies of the Meridian Empire). She calms the dragon by singing, preventing the explosion. Partially as thanks for saving his hide, L'Arc agrees to escort Ryfia to the nearby town of Topazion. (Though the heroes may seem somewhat clichéd at this early stage, we're told to expect several plot twists and shifting character allegiances as the story progresses.)

At this point you are introduced to Arc Rise Fantasia's gameplay structure—which turns out to be very reminiscent of Tales of Symphonia's. Like that GameCube title, Arc Rise



The stubborn **L'Arc** seems like the typical loner type, but he has a softer side that he shows to a few close individuals.

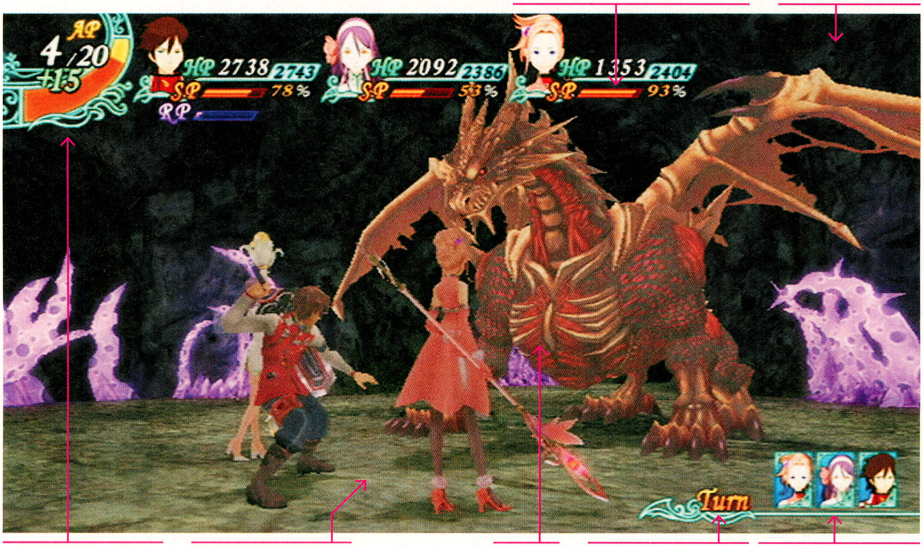

AP
0/23
+23
HP 3797 3797
SP 40%
RP
HP 3005 3011
SP 48%
HP 2105 3298
SP 100%
Real Sabre: Killed
1
1992
Chained Attack
Hit 2
Total Damage 3101
Turn

Fantasia has you exploring bright, colorful environments—in this case, the lush Retea Forest—and avoiding or confronting the many enemies wandering about. Occasionally you are interrupted by prompts (a button icon in the corner of the screen appears) to start brief conversations between members of your party. Called skits, these interludes—wherein the characters are presented as 2-D illustrations, contrasting with the 3-D polygonal models used in the rest of the game—help flesh out the party members and the world. In the first

COMBAT CLOSE UP

The number of Skill Points each character has. You always gain SP gradually, but you get it in greater quantities by attacking or being attacked.

A guest AI-controlled character can join you when the story dictates it.


AP
4/20
+15
HP 2738 2743
SP 78%
RP
HP 2092 2386
SP 53%
HP 1353 2404
SP 93%
Turn

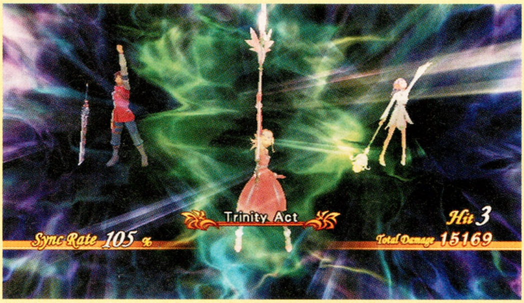
The pool of Action Points you can draw from. It refills a bit after each turn.

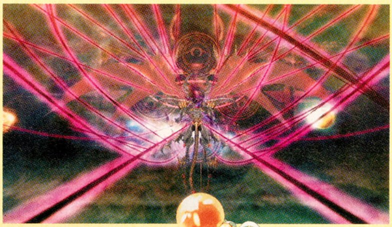
You can spend AP to move elsewhere on the battlefield. It might behoove these three to get out of this Feldragon's way.

The baddy.

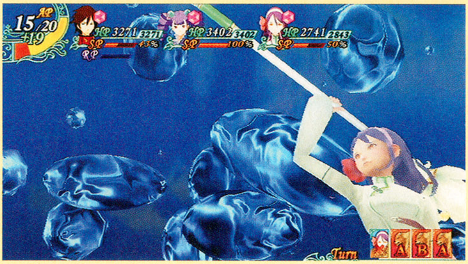
You can see who is going to perform an action next, allowing you to strategize.

Your party consists of up to three playable characters.





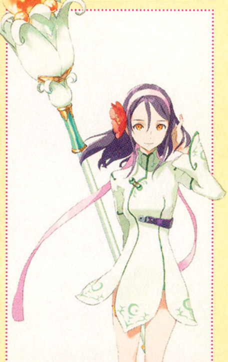
[Left] Your party members can team up to really dish out punishment.



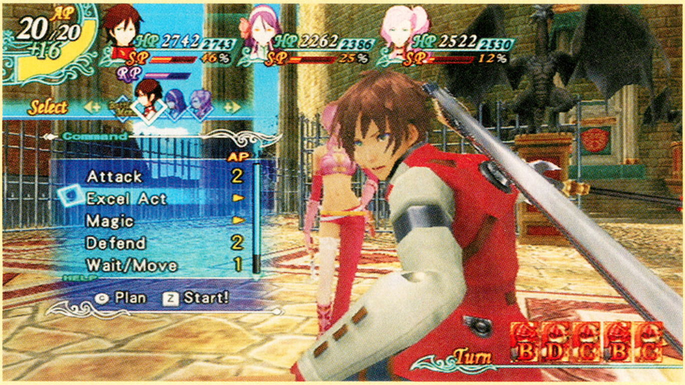
skit, for example, L'Arc thanks Ryfia for saving him from the Felburst, but Ryfia explains that she was just trying to ease the Feldragon's pain. (There's no voice acting during these skits, but English voice acting is present in most of the game's cut-scenes; unfortunately, there isn't enough space on the disc to include the Japanese-language track too.)

There's a good reason for this similarity between Arc Rise Fantasia and Tales of Symphonia, though, as Arc Rise Fantasia director Hiroyuki Kanemaru explains: "The 'Tales of' series is ultimately well designed not just in their story scenarios but also in their gameplay systems. Even the mechanics driving the actual gameplay represent the emotional bonds between characters. These gameplay mechanics really bring the characters to life and mean more than just a collection of data. It's just amazing. Japanese people consider the 'Tales of' series as one of the best examples of JRPGs. As the game creators behind Tales of Symphonia, the essence of the game is still a part of us." In addition to Kanemaru and Mikage, many members of the Arc Rise Fantasia team worked on Tales of Symphonia, including the scenario writer, the main battle programmer, and more.

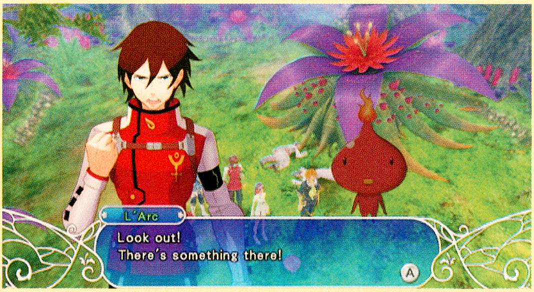
But whereas Tales of Symphonia is known for its action-heavy real-time battle system, Arc Rise Fantasia takes a turn-based tack that's more in line with the developer's goal of making a classic-feeling RPG. However, the battle system isn't as simple as selecting options from a menu and waiting for your characters to act. You're allotted a certain number of Action Points (AP) that can be spent on battle commands. The party of L'Arc and Ryfia has six AP to draw from, for instance. A physical attack costs two AP, so you could have L'Arc hack and slash enemies up to three times. However, you might want to get the more magically inclined Ryfia in on the action from time to time, especially since she's a proficient healer. (You can change characters by pressing left or right on the Wii Remote controller's Control Pad or by tapping the L or R Buttons on the Classic/GameCube controller.) If you'd prefer to forgo selecting individual options, you can let the game do the heavy lifting instead by pressing the Tactics button (C on the Nunchuk or Y on the Classic/GameCube controller) and selecting one of three battle plans. These plans—which you can set up outside of combat—allow you to tell your party members to do things such as use only physical attacks, use primarily magic, or use anything other than magic. When deciding on your Tactics, you'll want to keep in mind your characters' Skill Points (SP). If you accrue enough SP, you are able to unleash a powerful Excel Act that can greatly damage enemies or heal allies, depending on the character who uses the Excel Act.



Ryfia is clueless about the ways of the Meridian Empire, but this Diva—the title for priestesses of the Turemilian Republic—is adept at using magic.

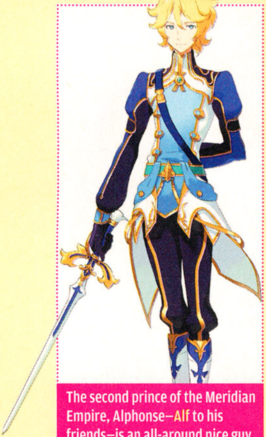


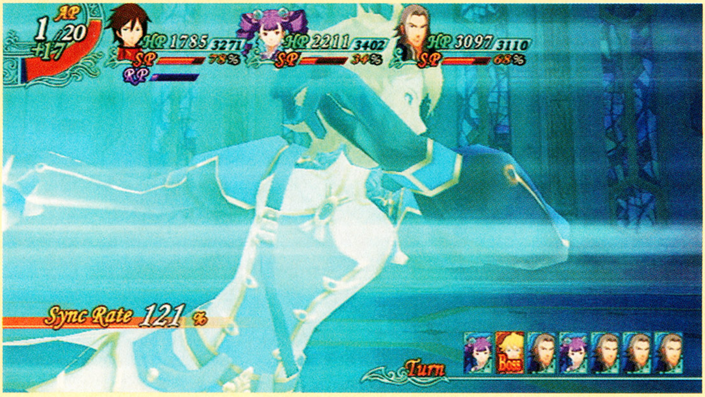
AP
Turn
Boss


L'Arc

Look out!
There's something there!

[Right] Yeah, L'Arc, that enemy looks *very* dangerous....


The second prince of the Meridian Empire, Alphonse—Alf to his friends—is an all-around nice guy beloved by the people of Meridia.



POWER PACK

L'Arc and Ryfia enter Topazion and head to the town's inn (so Ryfia, exhausted from her travels, can rest; get your mind out of the gutter), where they are greeted by L'Arc's friend, Prince Alphonse (but please call him Alf). Alf seems smitten by Ryfia (foreshadowing a love triangle, perhaps), and shows relief at seeing his friend L'Arc alive and well. Ryfia, on the other hand, is cared for by a doctor, who notices a Dragon Gem—a piece of a Feldragon—stuck to her skin. Ryfia is surprised to discover that this isn't customary in the Meridian Empire. Once rested, she reveals that her mother told her to go to Jada, a city that has a power plant of sorts: the Dragon Prison. There, a captured Rogress (a type of creature you will be able to summon during combat) produces Ray, the energy that powers pretty much everything in the world of Arc Rise Fantasia. As Jada is on the way back to the Royal City, L'Arc, Alf, and Ryfia head off together and you finally have a full party of three combatants. From time to time a fourth individual will join your team, but that person is always controlled by the AI. Why not just have a four-player party instead? Mikage explains: "Arc Rise Fantasia's turn-based command style was developed under a concept we call 'link-up combat.' To control all the possible combinations, we had to control the distance between characters and the [nonplayer character's] AI. Eventually, we discovered that the three-person party just worked the best."

Alf turns out to be a font of information about another of Arc Rise Fantasia's unique features: Arm Force. Each weapon contains latent Arm Force powers, and using a weapon for a certain amount of time unlocks the powers in the form of Weapon Pieces, which can be equipped to other armaments. For example, Alf has a Weapon Piece, the Lone Wolf, which allows you to deal more damage and take less damage when fighting by yourself. In the Weapon menu, you can attach the Lone Wolf to Ryfia's staff. To equip the Lone Wolf, however, you must have available slots on the four-by-four grid of squares called the Arm Force Frame—the Lone Wolf takes up three squares in a row, so you have to make sure the piece fits in with the rest of Ryfia's Arm Forces, Tetris-style.

There are other objects that give you more advantages in combat, such as devices called Orbs with which you can use magic. L'Arc, who refuses to use any Arm Force but his own and who doesn't use magic, is given an Orb and a Fire Gem by Alf. Using the Orb requires that Alf have an open slot in which to place the gem; you can visit a workshop and purchase new slots as well as other enhancements for your Orb. Once

MUSIC MAKER

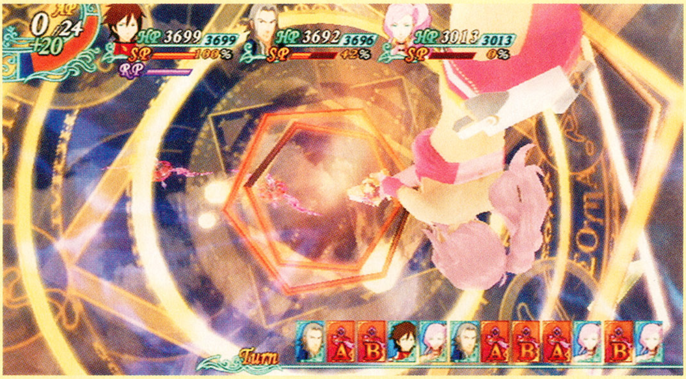
Arc Rise Fantasia's music comes courtesy of Yasunori Mitsuda, whose credits include the soundtracks for games such as Chrono Trigger/Chrono Cross and Xenogears/Xenosaga, as well as more recent titles such as Luminous Arc and Sands of Destruction. Imageepoch president Ryoei Mikage tells us this interesting tidbit about the composer: "Mr. Mitsuda has his own strict rule stating he *does not* start composing music until the game itself is finished. This makes his work synchronize well with games. [His compositions] match onscreen gameplay but also add to the game."

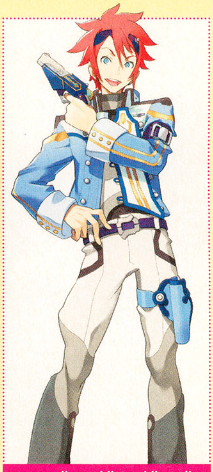
the gem is set, L'Arc is able to use fire spells during battle.

WONDERFUL WORLD

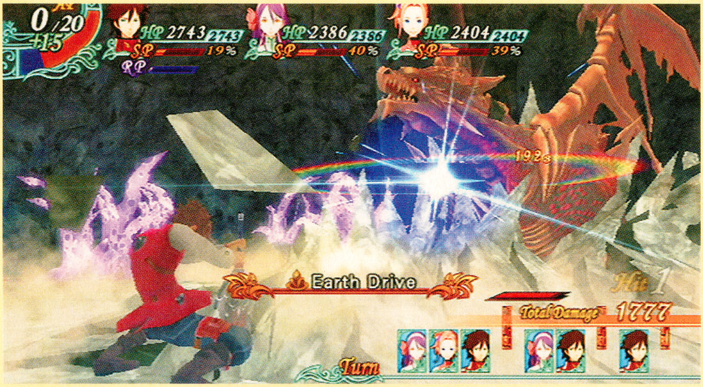
The road to Jada is pretty direct thanks to the onscreen map that shows your objective. But you have the option to freelance if you want, because unlike many modern RPGs that give you a list of locations you can travel to—such as Tales of Symphonia: Dawn of the New World for Wii—Arc Rise Fantasia gives you a vast overworld to explore. Kanemaru believes that this kind of overworld is "the best way to let players feel like they are on a wonderful and epic adventure." He tells us, "I have personally sworn to myself to have it from the very beginning, since we've decided to stick to the way classic RPGs play. We hope players feel genuine excitement when uncovering new towns and dungeons, and a feeling of liberation when sailing on airships throughout the world."

We certainly felt that excitement when playing Arc Rise Fantasia. It's the type of game that we want to see on Wii: an epic adventure—"I would say it takes about 30 hours to finish the main story line and 20-30 more hours to enjoy the rest," says Kanemaru—that's modern yet also features time-honored JRPG sensibilities. "It's been a while since people started saying the era of the JRPG is over or dead," Kanemaru muses. "We believe we have a lot more to offer, and we really want players to see JRPGs can still rock!"

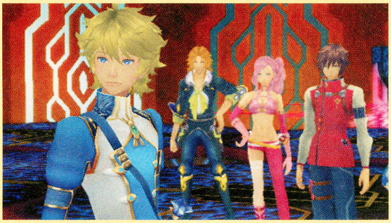

AP
0/24
+20
HP 3699 3699
S.P 100%
R.P
HP 3692 3696
S.P 42%
HP 3013 3013
S.P 0%
A
B
Turn

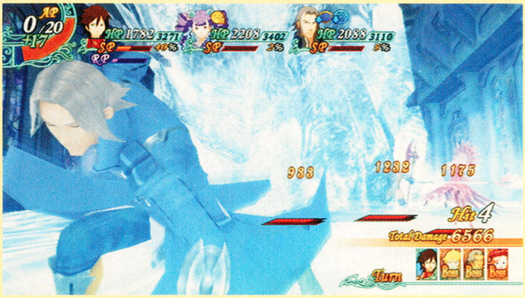


A cowardly Meridian soldier, Niko joins L'Arc, Ryfia, and Alf in the city of Jada, looks up to L'Arc and is a source of comic relief.

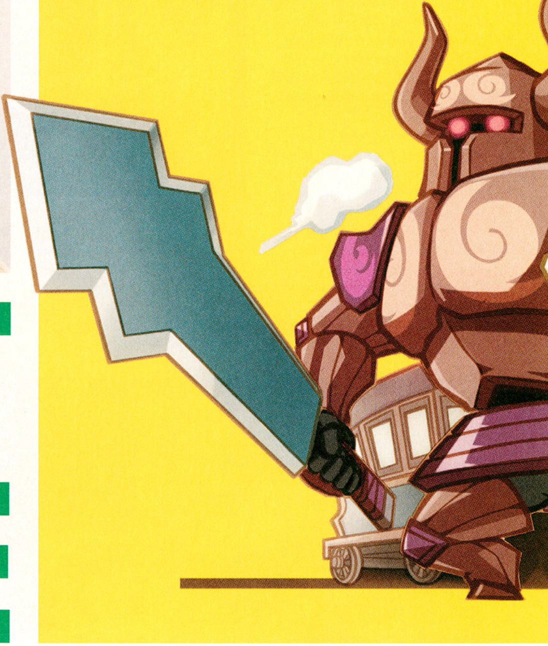

AP
0/20
+15
HP 2743 2743
S.P 19%
R.P
HP 2386 2386
S.P 40%
HP 2404 2404
S.P 39%
192
Earth Drive
Hit 1
Total Damage 1777
Turn

[Below] Arc Rise Fantasia is filled with a variety of colorful characters. But just because some of them may start out as your allies/enemies doesn't mean that will always be the case.




AP
0/20
+17
HP 1782 3271
S.P 46%
R.P
HP 2208 3402
S.P 2%
HP 2088 3110
S.P 5%
988
1232
1175
Hit 4
Total Damage 6566
Turn
Boss
Boss
Boss

“WHEN DEVELOPING ZELDA FOR THE NINTENDO DS, WE ALWAYS KEEP OUR EYES OPEN FOR INTERESTING IDEAS.”



SPIRIT GUIDE

Daiki Iwamoto, the director of The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks, tells us why Link conducts a train, how Zelda became playable, and why Hyrule has been overrun by rabbits.

The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks isn't just another great adventure game; it's also one of the series's most unique installments in recent memory. With a mix of play styles ranging from conducting a train to directing a possessed suit of armor, the game holds fresh challenges and surprises for even the most experienced Zelda fans. Spirit Tracks also introduces memorable new characters, gives us a story that finally teams Princess Zelda with Link on his adventure, challenges players with some of the most demanding dungeons of any Legend of Zelda game, and debuts fun and useful new weapons and items that let Link crack a whip, whirl the wind, shift sand, and more. Many of us here at Nintendo Power are on our second playthrough, and with the game fresh in our minds, we asked Daiki Iwamoto, the game's director, to take us on a behind-the-scenes tour of his team's latest creation.

NINTENDO POWER First a boat, and now a train—why do the Zelda games for the Nintendo DS feature vehicles in such a prominent way?

DAIKI IWAMOTO It's because we thought [the vehicles] would make for an adventure that was slightly different from the parts where players explore fields and dungeons with Link on foot. By weaving together the parts where the players explore [by] moving Link freely through the territory, and the "high adventure" parts where they use boats or trains, I think that we not only expanded players' expectations for the next adventure, but also managed to properly use different game styles as a base.

Chancellor Cole and Byrne are two interesting new characters that seem somewhat unique in the Zelda series. Would you say that their personalities and story arcs tie into any overall theme for the game?

In this story, we wanted the enemy characters to have personality, too. They're rivals, so to speak. Byrne [is a] bad guy but a very cool one, and Chancellor Cole [is the] real villain who uses Byrne. In terms of the flow of the game as a whole, we emphasized Byrne's strength and Chancellor Cole's cowardice, and I think that, among players, it further strengthened the rival relationship during the adventures with Zelda.

It appears that your team put a great deal of effort into finding new and creative uses for the traditional Zelda items and weapons. Was this a goal during development? And do you feel that fans can perhaps become too comfortable with long-running gameplay elements?

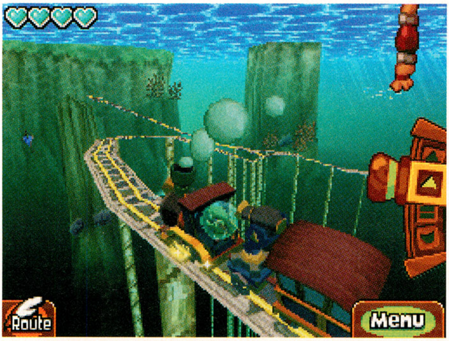
When developing Zelda for the Nintendo DS, we always keep our eyes open for interesting ideas we

BY **CHRIS SLATE**

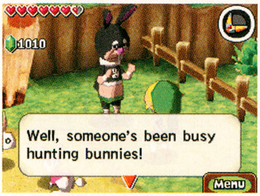
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO** RELEASED: **DECEMBER 2009** DS

can put in as we work. We paid particular attention when developing the basic operations and item operations, looking for ways to make the [use of] even the older weapons (such as the bow) surprising [in ways] that could only be performed with the DS. Some players who are used to the conventional button operations may feel a bit bewildered at first, but after they've played for a short while, I think they'll be able to move Link so naturally it will feel as though they've always done it this way.

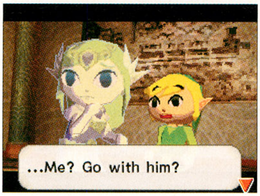
How would you describe Zelda's personality in this game, and do you feel that any of her traits are unique among the many incarnations of the character?
For this game, it all began with the idea of clearing dungeons by controlling phantoms. Then we thought that if we had Zelda enter the phantoms, the sense of adventuring together would be even stronger. After that, we thought as long as we're doing that, it would be fun to have Zelda along from start to finish, and so in this game she becomes a spirit and [teams with Link]. Since she is along for the adventure, rather than having her be a traditional, delicate, dignified "princesslike" character, we made her a bit mischievous, and she seems just like a regular girl. We thought that would keep the adventure from becoming too serious, and that it makes you feel much closer to her and more protective of her. Here, too, people who are used to the former "princess" image may feel a bit off-balance, but in the second half of the game, I'm pretty sure they'll be glad they got to adventure with Zelda.



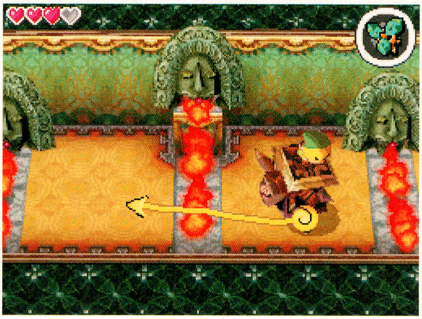
[Above] While making Spirit Tracks, every member of the development team was encouraged to contribute as many ideas as possible, even wild ones such as running the train under the ocean.



Well, someone's been busy hunting bunnies!



...Me? Go with him?

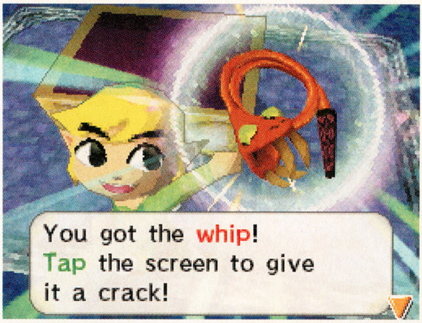


Where did the idea of collecting bunnies for the Rabbitland Rescue come from? Does someone on the team really like rabbits? And in general, how would you describe the way that your team approaches humor in Spirit Tracks and in the Zelda series as a whole?
There *was* a staff member on the team who loved rabbits! In the earliest stages of development, that member told us that they definitely wanted a rabbit in the game. Just then, we were working with the concept that, in scenes when you're riding the train, if you pay close attention to the background, there'll be something good in it for you, so we decided to have rabbits hidden in the shadows of rocks and things like that. It isn't just rabbits, either; we adopted other elements from idle conversations. Someone mentioned having a banditlike character attack the train when you had passengers on board and carry them off, and someone else wanted to have the train run on the ocean floor. We always pay attention when we chat with people, just in case an idea from casual conversation happens to become reality.

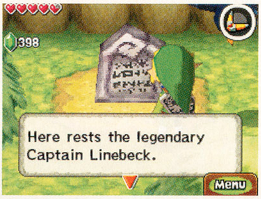
It seems that Spirit Tracks, more than perhaps any other Zelda, has a lot of explicit ties to a previous game. Why was this a focus? And, even if it's not an official part of the story, do you have any feelings as to exactly what happened to Tetra, Link, and Linebeck from Phantom Hourglass?
We developed [Spirit Tracks] as the DS sequel, so we did feel that we wanted to keep the atmosphere similar. So, you see, we made a few links between this story and the previous one in order to have a

similar atmosphere and characters, and that made it easier to create character settings.

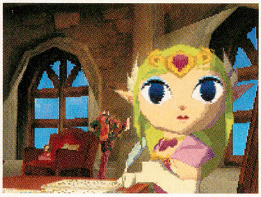
That said, if we'd concentrated too hard on making the game a sequel, people who hadn't played the previous game wouldn't understand this one. We were careful to pay close attention to the parts that would pull people into the story even if they weren't familiar with the previous game. However, we did put in [things] here and there that would let people who had played the previous game grin and think, "Oh, is *that* what happened to this guy?" We'd like the players to imagine for themselves what happened to Tetra, Link, and Linebeck from the previous game, and we don't talk about it in much detail.



You got the whip!
Tap the screen to give it a crack!

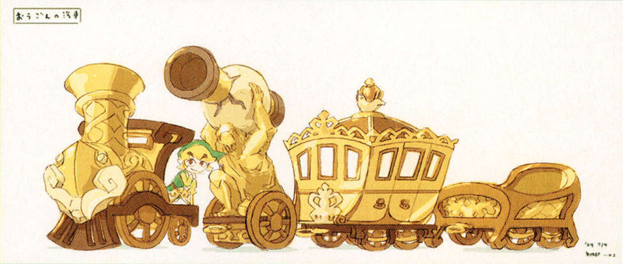


Here rests the legendary Captain Linebeck.



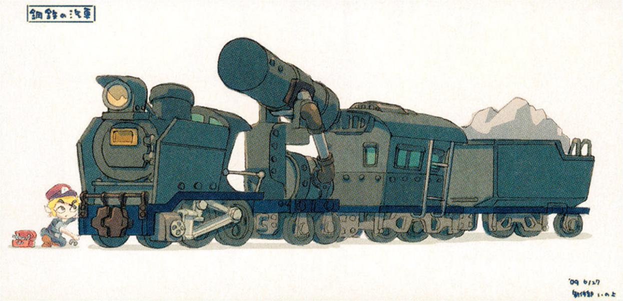
[Above] Not only were all-new items added in Spirit Tracks, but returning favorites gained all-new functions. [Right] Depending on how you answer one of Princess Zelda's questions, the ending will change.

How did the team settle on the Whirlwind, whip, and Sand Wand as the game's new items? Which was thought of first: the items or the types of puzzles that required them?
When coming up with items, our basic policy was to make all the items new ones, except for things that were a hit in the last game and things we might still be able to use to propose new ways of playing. We kept the boomerang, bow and bombs, and got rid of the grappling hook, Bombchus, and hammer. Then we started by thinking up three items to replace the ones we'd discarded. As much as possible, we specifically tried to think of things with DS-specialized functions, and things that could be used in a number of different ways. We come up with the puzzles not beforehand, but while we think up the item functions and examine the ideas those items give us.



LAYING TRACKS

These concept sketches provide a peek at some of the game's many train designs. With so many custom compartments, there was quite a bit for the designers to work out.



At the climax of the final battle, Link and Zelda deliver a memorable final blow that recalls the ending of The Wind Waker. Was this an intentional reference?
It wasn't on purpose, exactly, but we do put universal emphasis on the drama of Link and Zelda working together to confront a mighty enemy. I think we managed to produce a powerful [final] battle using the two screens.

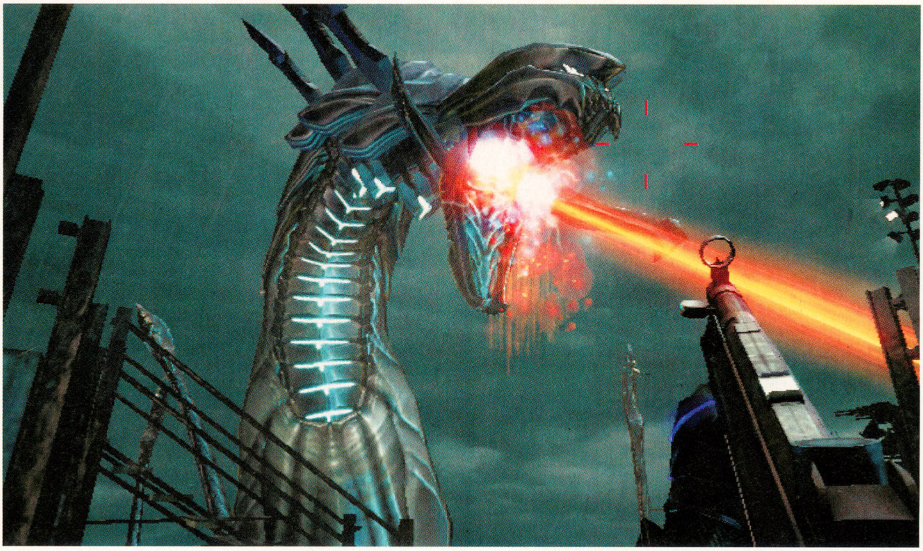
The ending seems to be somewhat ambiguous with regard to Link and Zelda's future paths. Do you have a sense of how their lives and relationship continue?
It's emphasized that the world is now peaceful, and that its people are beginning to return to their former way of life. Rather than showing everyone what happens between Link and Zelda, I'd like each of the players to imagine it themselves, and bask in the afterglow. By the way, before you fight the last battle, there is a place where Zelda asks you a question. If you choose a different answer to that question, the ending changes just a little bit. I'd like the players to enjoy that part, too.

Bigger. Bolder. Better. The war of the worlds escalates in Conduit 2.

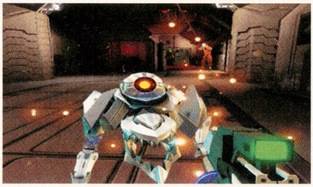
SECOND SHOT

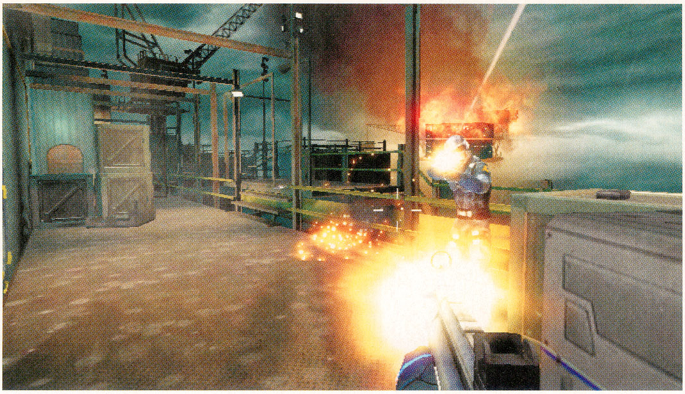
BY **STEVE THOMASON**

PUBLISHER: **SEGA** DEVELOPER: **HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE** RELEASE: **FALL 2010** Wii



The Conduit received a fair amount of praise from critics and audiences alike when it debuted last summer, but many of those accolades were tempered by the caveat "for a Wii game." The criminal shortage of top-notch first-person shooters on Nintendo's console meant that the game stood out from a lackluster field. Pitted against the Halos and Half-Lifes of the world, it wouldn't compare so favorably. The developers at High Voltage Software fully recognize that state of affairs, as they made clear during our recent visit for an exclusive first look at Conduit 2. Everyone on the team is surprisingly candid about the original game's shortcomings, and they're determined to address each and every one of them to make the sequel a first-rate shooter, and not just "for a Wii game."





Their first order of business: expanding the game's scope. "In the first Conduit, I think the core experience is very solid," says producer Josh Olson. "The shooting feels fun and the customizable controls really demonstrated the benefits of the Wii Remote. So we're not going to move away from that, but it was very much the same thing over and over and over again. In Conduit 2, we're trying to do a lot more in terms of level design and gameplay design to mix it up more." That starts with the settings. Whereas the original took place entirely in Washington DC, the sequel will whisk returning protagonist Michael Ford through a variety of locales around the globe, including Siberia, Atlantis, and Agartha, a legendary city at the center of Earth. As that itinerary implies, High Voltage is really embracing the science-fiction element this time out. "That's something I think we didn't go as far with as we could have in the first game," opines Olson. "So instead of DC and all near-real-world stuff, we're going a little bit crazier."

SEA SURPRISE

Conduit 2 starts off with a bang—literally—as the crash of thunder and a torrential downpour welcome you to a massive oil derrick in the middle of an ocean. "At the end of The Conduit, you pursue John Adams* through a portal, and that's immediately where you jump into part two," Olson explains. "You come out of this portal, and you have no idea where you are." The one thing you do know is that the derrick's occupants are suspiciously hostile to your presence, greeting you with a hail of gunfire. The action that ensues is more energetic than just about anything from the first game, thanks in no small part to the dynamic level design. As Olson points out, "It's not just room-corridor-big room-corridor. We're opening up a lot. We're going for big vistas and multi-tiered areas. There will be multiple paths. We want it to feel bigger and give players the sense that there's more going on."

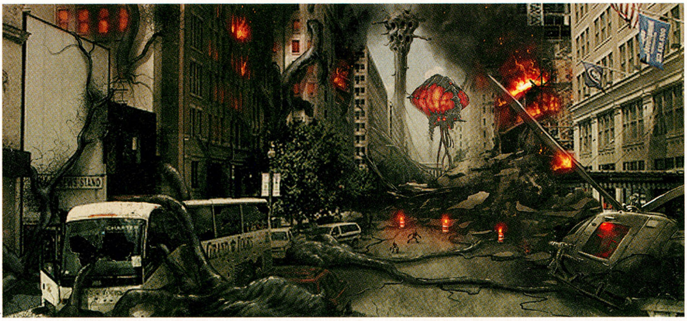
---

*The malevolent alien mastermind from the first game, not the guy played by Paul Giamatti in that HBO miniseries.

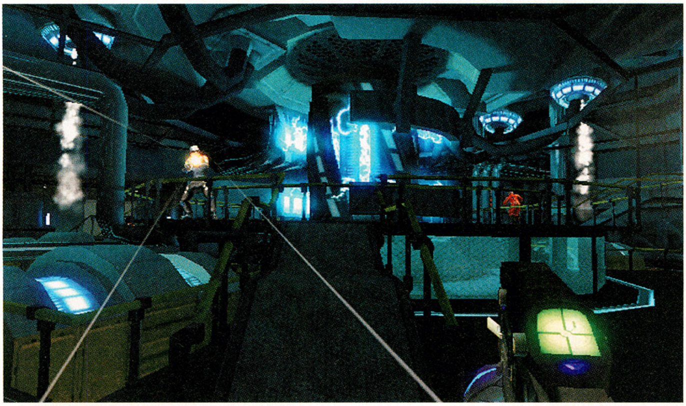
In this particular level, it's not hard to sense that there's more going on. As you fight your way across the derrick, a gargantuan sea serpent wreaks havoc on the facility. It seems something has upset the leviathan, and though you'll eventually have to deal with him yourself (more on that later), his rage occasionally comes in handy. Our favorite instance occurs when you enter a room where a wall has been blown out. Through the opening, you see an enemy chopper descend on you, but before the aircraft can open fire, the leviathan suddenly emerges from the water and takes a bite out of the whirlybird. It's an eye-popping scene that really catches you by surprise and exemplifies the sequel's grand ambitions. "Having those types of 'wow' moments is really important," stresses Olson. "The first game had a few of them here and there, but to be honest, they were kind of an afterthought. In Conduit 2, we've thought about those from the very beginning. We're integrating those moments throughout gameplay to tell a better story and to make it more exciting for the player. I think that's really key."

Of course, such moments are made even more impactful by High Voltage's ability to push the Wii console like few other third-party studios can. Screenshots don't do it justice: Conduit 2 looks stunning in action. The team continues to refine its proprietary Quantum 3 engine—surfaces like glass and ice showcase convincing reflections, the texture work is unparalleled, and both lighting and shadow have improved significantly.

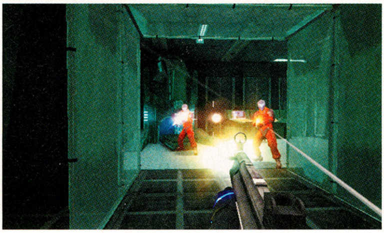
Even more promising is that art direction is being paid as much attention as the technology this time around. "We've done an incredible amount of concept work," explains Eric Nofsinger, the studio's chief creative officer. "We made that a much more integral part of development and really tried to use these pieces for inspiration. It was cool having a real-world location like DC [in the first game], but we kind of limited ourselves in a way. We had a space that people knew, but we didn't take enough artistic liberties. [For

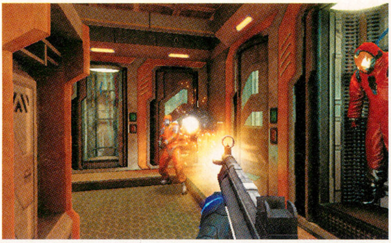


As the war between humans and aliens rages on, Washington DC looks a little worse for wear.

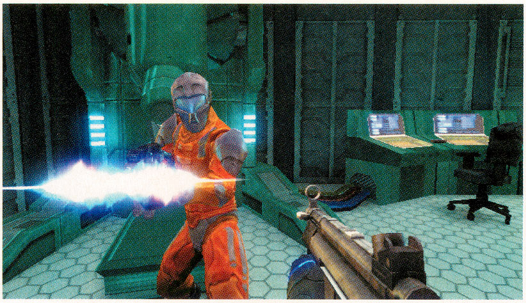


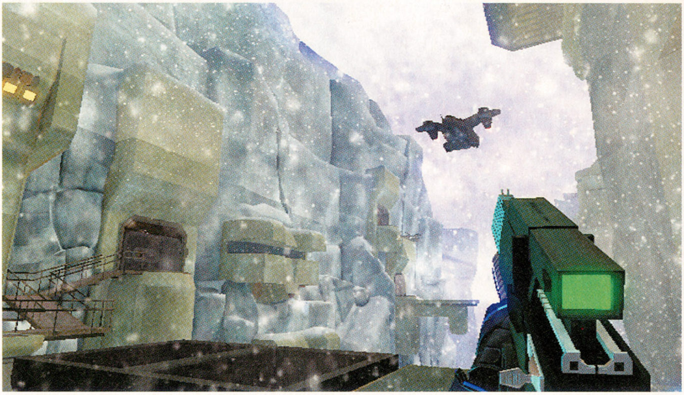
[Left] Expect to spend some time in the great outdoors.

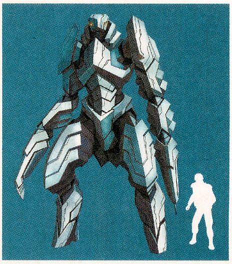




[Below] One level takes place in an old Soviet military base that's been converted to a robot factory. Danger, comrade!







[Above] The Guardians of Atlantis are imposing figures. Humans barely come up to their knees.

Conduit 2], we're doing a lot of stuff where we're trying to make these spaces more interesting and tell a story about the game's world."

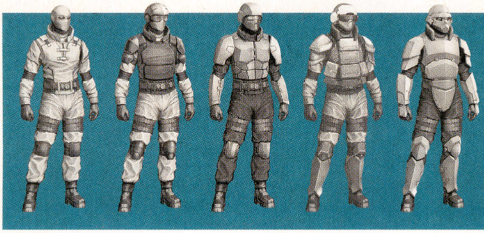
LOADED FOR BEAR

Ford's travails on the oil derrick culminate with our hero going one-on-on against the leviathan in an awe-inspiring boss battle. Normal weapons are ineffective against the gargantuan beast, so you'll have to hop on one of the derrick's mounted defense turrets. The serpent is more clever than you might expect, though, and targets not only you, but the generators that supply power to the turrets. To prevent him from cutting the electricity, you have to find his weak points and stun him as quickly as possible. Once you've sufficiently weakened your opponent, you can impale him with a harpoon from one of the turrets. A second harpoon will complete the circuit and fry the overgrown calamari.

High Voltage promises that additional boss encounters will be sprinkled throughout the game, and that's just one way the team hopes to spice things up. We got an early glimpse of an airborne chase scene, during which you'll man a ship's rear gun emplacement to shoot down your pursuers (among them, jet pack-equipped soldiers who will try to board your craft).

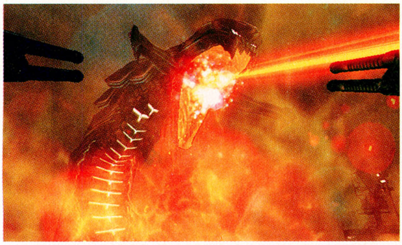
That extra variety should go a long way toward keeping us more engaged, but the developers realize they need to do a better job of telling a story, as well. After all, the first game delivered its narrative almost exclusively through conversations on Ford's headset. "It was just sort of these disembodied voices talking in your ear," laments Olson. "There wasn't any sort of direct contact between characters. I do think we had a fairly solid story, but we didn't relate it very well. In Conduit 2, we'll have a lot more NPCs and Ford will actually interact with them. Plus, it's going to feel more like a full-blown science-fiction adventure than an episode of *The X-Files*."

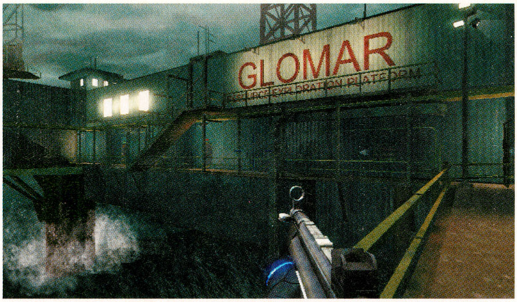
So what sets this adventure in motion? As Olson explains it, "Adams is the alien who's been running the show behind the scenes in the US throughout the centuries. But there are other aliens around the world who control different territories. So there's the Chinese equivalent, there's the Russian equivalent. But Adams has been especially successful and he wants to take over the



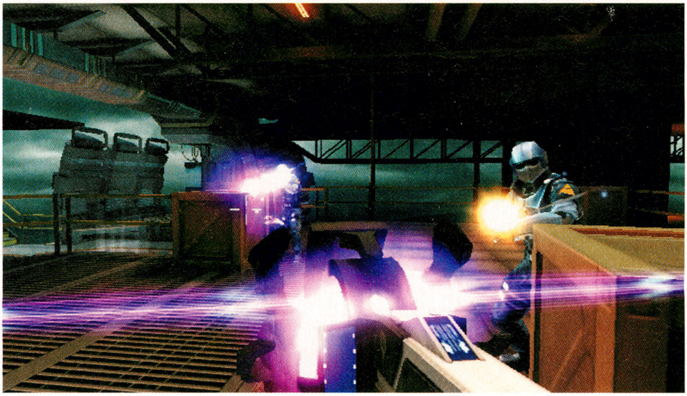
DRESSED TO KILL

All of the armor for enemy soldiers is modular, which means individual pieces can be mixed and matched to create dozens of different looks. The effect is purely aesthetic—it won't affect the strength or behavior of the troops in any way—but the game's world is a lot more convincing when it doesn't look like you're shooting the same guy over and over again.





[Above] Someone's got indigestion. That's what happens when you eat a helicopter. [Right] The water effects are amazing.

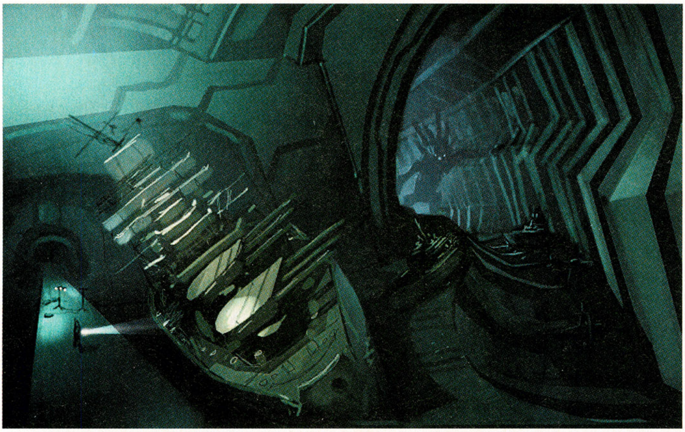


world now. So Ford's job is to enlist the help of these other aliens—these 'siblings' of John Adams."

Throughout your travels, Atlantis serves as a hub of sorts. There you'll find portals leading to your various destinations, and you have some freedom to choose which stage you'll tackle next. At a certain point in the game, you'll also return to Washington DC, tasked with recovering an important artifact from the Smithsonian. "The city is much more overrun with alien growth than in the first game," warns Olson. "Plus, the Drudge and the Trust are still fighting there, so we have AI vs. AI vs. player now. You'll stumble upon engagements that are already happening."

That's part of a larger effort to make the firefights in Conduit 2 more sophisticated. "The AI in particular has been a big focus for us," insists Nofsinger. "We really want the enemies to come across as intelligent. In the first game, they just sit there waiting for you to show up. This time, we want it to feel like a living environment, like everyone was doing something before you got there." What's more, your surroundings now include lots of interactive elements. Stuff moves, things can break, and we even saw an enemy soldier knock over a soda machine and use it for cover.

You'll also face a wider variety of hostiles, including foes specific to each location. Atlantis, for example, hosts hulking, 30-foot-tall Guardians, and in Siberia, robotic wolves are unleashed if you get caught by a security camera. (During our demo, that actually proved advantageous, as you could then crawl through the open doggie door and get a drop on the guards in the next room.) There's plenty of differentiation between the human soldiers, as well. First, they can carry any weapon in the game, which affects their AI accordingly. A guy with a sniper rifle will hang back, while a shotgun-wielding baddie will try to get in your grill. And to make it feel like you're not just fighting an army of clones, High Voltage has designed a modular



Conduit 2's Atlantis is at the bottom of the Bermuda Triangle, so you'll find missing ships there from all different eras.

system that allows the developers to mix and match different helmets, shoulder pads, etc. (See the Dressed to Kill sidebar.) "A cool side effect of that is we can have armor pieces blowing off," enthuses Olson. "Shooting someone's helmet off is very satisfying."

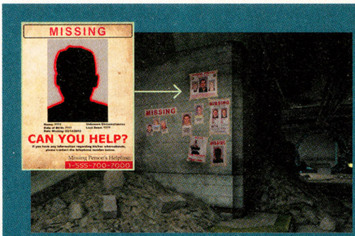
Of course, a shooter is only as good as its weapons, and what we've seen of Conduit 2's arsenal is extremely promising. For starters, it includes all 18 firearms from the original game, most of which boast a new secondary function. The TCP Launcher, for example, lets you stick its plasma canisters to the ground, essentially turning them into proximity mines. It's the seven brand-new weapons that are likely to steal the show, however—at least, if the three we saw are any indication.

Without a doubt, our favorite of the bunch is the Vortex Cannon. By charging this magnificent piece of hardware, you can temporarily erect an energy shield that intercepts incoming bullets (or grenades, rockets, etc.). The projectiles float in front of you, à la *The Matrix*, until you release the trigger and launch them back at your target. It makes you feel like a total badass and features one of the coolest sound effects ever.

The Phase Rifle—another of the new additions—is a long-range gun that lets you not only pick off enemies from afar, but through walls. "That presents some interesting challenges for gameplay balancing," admits Olson, "but we'll get there." During our demo, the Phase Rifle significantly slowed Ford's movement, and once you've trained your sight on a target, you have to "tune" the rifle by twisting the Wii Remote controller.

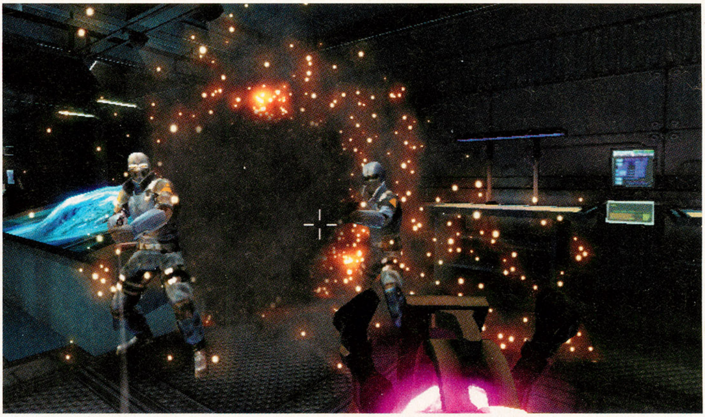
Finally, High Voltage showed us the Deployable Turret, which is exactly what it sounds like. You can set it down just about anywhere, and you control it with a little handheld display that alerts you when the turret detects something. You then have the option to simply pull the trigger and let the weapon autoaim, or to bring up the turret's camera and target your foes manually.

Rounding out Ford's arsenal is the All-Seeing Eye, a holdover from the first game. The mysterious device let you uncover hidden traps, enemies, and other secrets in The Conduit, though the concept felt sorely underutilized. Olson agrees, and points to that as another issue his team hopes to remedy with the

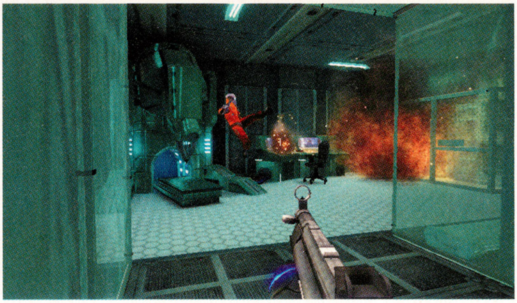


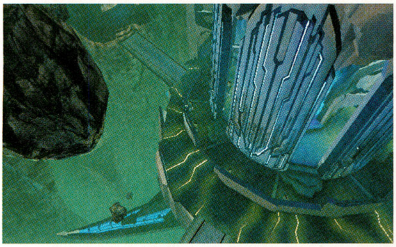
GET IN THE GAME

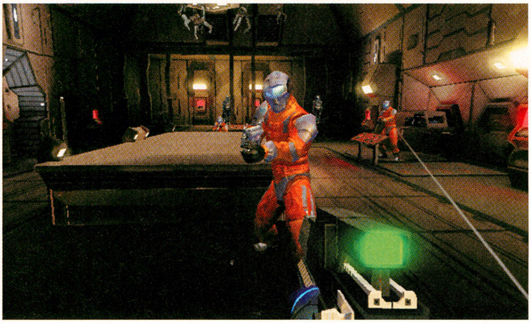
Want to appear in Conduit 2? Sega and High Voltage are running a sweepstakes that could let you see your name and face plastered on a Missing Person flier or a Wanted poster hung somewhere in the game. The lucky winners will also receive a free copy of Conduit 2. For more details, go to www.conduit2game.com/sweeps.



[Above-left] The aliens have received a bit of a makeover. [Right] Check out the transparency effect on those clean-room walls.







[Right] "This board room meeting is adjourned!"

sequel. "We all thought the ASE was cool, but we didn't do enough with it," he confesses. "So in Conduit 2, we're going to integrate the ASE a lot more. That means more puzzles and hacking minigames. It's also a bit more of a detective tool now; we're trying to put a lot more conspiracy objects and secrets in the environments to give you more reasons to use the ASE. Once you've scanned an object, you'll be able to learn more about it in the game's new data log. So it really plays into us trying to tell a deeper story." One neat example of that: in a storage room aboard the oil derrick, we spotted the escutcheon from a ship called the *USS Cyclops*. Scanning the hunk of wood revealed that the *Cyclops* disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle in 1918 (true story), giving you a hint as to your current location. Olson also hints that the ASE is somehow tied to Atlantis, and you can wield it to exert limited control over the Guardians and other denizens of the underwater city (either attracting them or repelling them, depending on how you use the device).

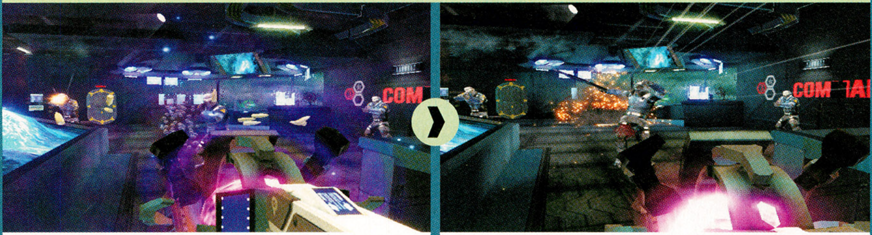
FRIEND OR FOE

Along with all the improvements to the single-player campaign, Conduit 2 will look to build upon one of its predecessor's biggest strengths: a robust online offering. Up to 12 players will be able to compete over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection (and trash-talk via Wii Speak compat-

HEAVY ARTILLERY

Here's a look at some of Conduit 2's creative new weapons in action.

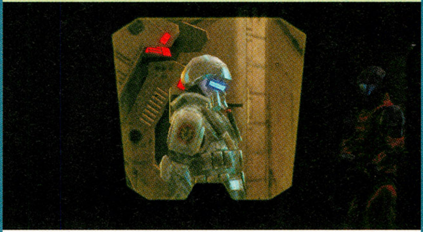
VORTEX CANNON



First you catch the bullets...

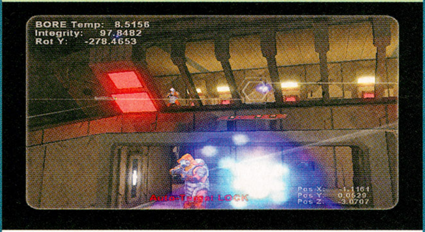
Then send them back from whence they came.

PHASE RIFLE



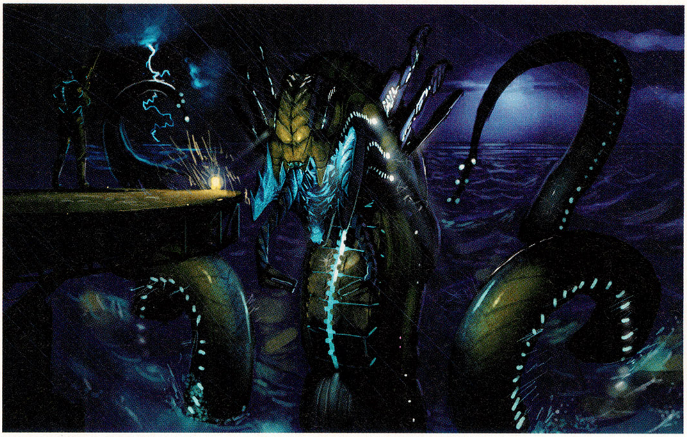
Enemies can run, but they can't hide from a gun that shoots through walls.

DEPLOYABLE TURRET



Why put yourself in danger when you can mow down bad guys remotely?

As evidenced by this gloriously ugly mug, Conduit 2's art direction is a heck of a lot more interesting than the first game's.

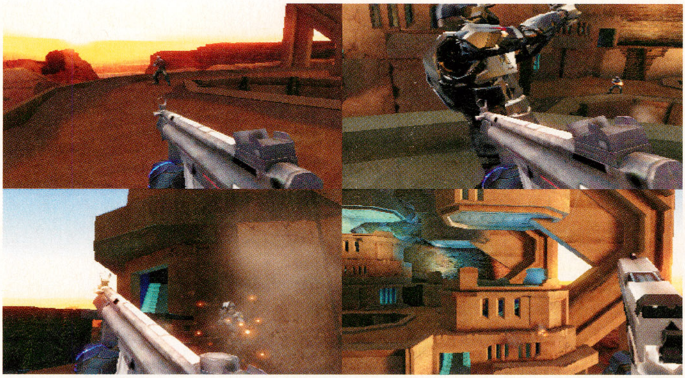


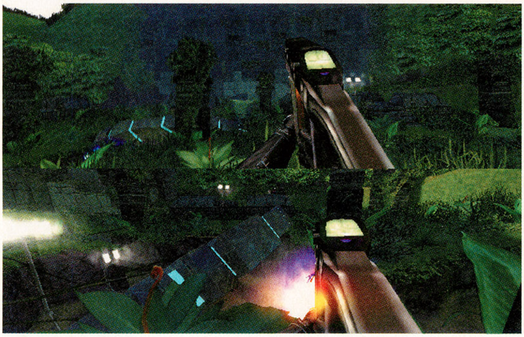
ibility). Though High Voltage isn't ready to spill the beans about specific modes just yet, the studio promises a bevy of new gameplay types, as well as the return of the first game's innovative Bounty Hunter mode.

As you might expect, weapons like the Vortex Cannon will add a few new wrinkles to online competition, as will the introduction of different character classes, each with unique attributes. You'll also be able to unlock suit upgrades that bestow your character with special skills; robotic legs, for example, will let you sprint greater distances. Right now, the plan is to have one primary suit slot and two secondary slots where you can equip upgrades, but that may change in the final game. From a purely cosmetic standpoint, you'll have tons of options to change your character's appearance using the same modular system the team uses to diversify enemies.

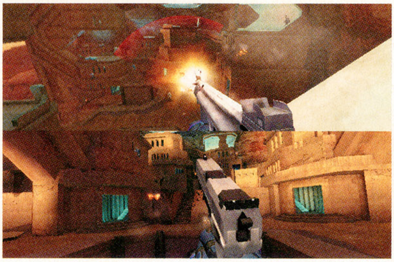
For those who prefer to keep their gunfights local, Conduit 2 will feature a two-to-four-player split-screen option for all of the game's competitive modes. And when you want to take a break from blasting your friends and loved ones, you can team up with them in the new co-op Invasion mode. Up to four players can join forces (either via split screen or online), and the challenges they'll face are unique to this mode. Further details remain under wraps, but we always welcome the chance to eradicate some alien scum with our fellow humans.

All told, this is one of the most ambitious sequels in recent memory. In our review of The Conduit last July, we wrote, "Now that the groundwork is in place, we'd love to see if High Voltage can take the next step and forge something truly special." So far, at least, the Conduit 2 developers are on the right path.





[Left, below] Two-player games can also be split vertically.



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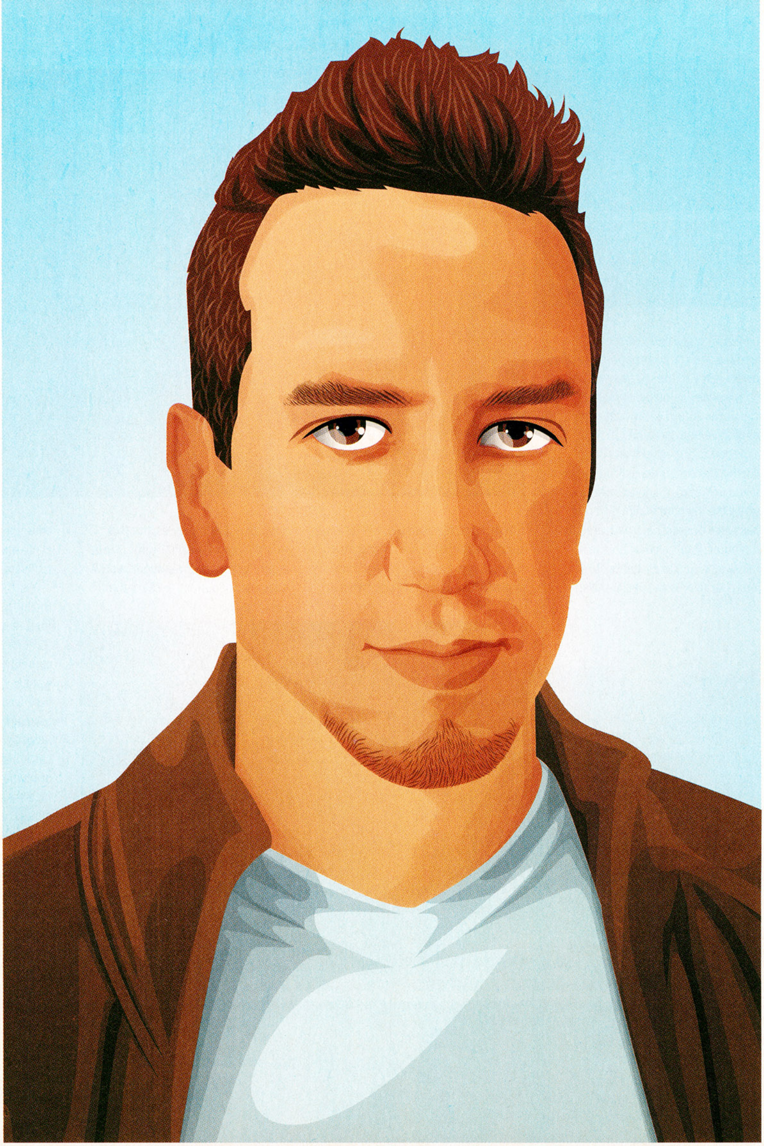
Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
May 28, 1981

BIRTHPLACE
Boston, Massachusetts

POSITION
Cofounder and creative director, 5th Cell

BEST KNOWN FOR
Letting gamers draw and create whatever they want, being a successful game designer at a ridiculously young age

FAVORITE FOOD
Steak

CURRENT PROJECTS
The next Scribblenauts (DS), a new 3-D game for Xbox Live Arcade

Jeremiah Slaczka

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

If you're talking about innovation and creativity in modern gaming, one of the names that would inevitably come up is Jeremiah Slaczka. A few years ago a game in which you drew all the characters and power-ups yourself, or a game in which you made anything appear by simply writing it would have seemed like ridiculous notions, but thanks to Slaczka and his colleagues at 5th Cell, such off-the-wall concepts have become reality. As 5th Cell's creative director (and one of the company's cofounders), it's Slaczka's job to come up with fresh and surprising new ideas, and so far his efforts have delivered impressively; Drawn to Life and Scribblenauts, both for the Nintendo DS handheld, are among the most successful original games in recent memory. If those projects are any indication of what's to come, Slaczka and 5th Cell will be wowing gamers for a long time.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you get into the video game business?
JEREMIAH SLACZKA
To be honest, I just kind of fell into it. I dropped out of high school—something I don't recommend—and wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I was obviously really into video games as a kid. I found out that lots of people made amateur games on the Internet and was surprised to learn it was even possible.

So, I joined a team and started learning the ropes of game development. From there I met Joe Tringali, 5th Cell's general manager, and we formed a company called Epix Interactive, which flopped. I've never actually worked for a company that wasn't my own. Weird huh?

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
I never thought about it as a kid, really. I figured whatever I would do I'd make sure I'm happy doing it, and I am.

How were you introduced to video games? What kinds of games did you play when you were younger?
I remembering playing games like Contra and Altered Beast at my friends' houses on the NES and Master System a lot, but the first system that I owned was a Game Boy. I played my first [action-adventure], The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening, and it was a blast!

It wasn't until the SNES/Genesis era that I really got into games, though. Playing Final Fantasy VI for the first time was incredible. I remember my mom used to yell at me to stop playing games like Final Fantasy or Chrono Trigger and read a book, but my dad would say, "He's reading—see! This is the future for their generation; he's still learning." I guess he was right. [Laughs]

Why did you and your colleagues decide to found 5th Cell? What were your goals for the company and as game developers?
As I said, this is actually our second company. We took the experience from our failure and applied it to 5th Cell. We've always wanted to make our own games, but not just any games: we wanted to make really unique, awesome games. Our motto is, we make games that you can't get from anywhere else, from anyone else. We tried doing licenses for a while, but it never worked out. That road, for us at least, was a dead end. We wanted to end up in console development, and now after six years we're finally doing it.

What does the name 5th Cell refer to?
Our name is from my writing. I studied screenwriting for a few years and an organization in one of my screenplays was called 5th Cell and I thought it sounded good as a company name. It's hip, but still corporate-sounding, which kind of embodies what we want to be. We're not a crazy indie company, but we're not hardcore corporate, either.

What does your job as creative director entail?
My job as creative director is to ensure the vision for the project stays true; I always think about the end product for the player.

I work on multiple projects at a time in different stages of development. Very early on I spend time coming up with new game concepts for our next title, typically months before we begin pre-production. It's fun to sit around and think of new ideas. I spend a lot of nights doing this when my brain is most creative.

Do you have any advice for prospective game creators who are hoping to start their own studios?
First of all, if you want to do it, then do it! Don't talk about doing it—it will only waste your time. Just do it! That's the hardest step. Second, there will be a ton of failure, so just keep on pushing through those failures. Third, talk with your actions, not your words. Lastly, no one will help you or believe in you at first, and rightfully so—you're just starting out! You're a newbie! So don't have an ego. Be humble; understand they don't know how awesome you think you are, but over time your work will show through. Also, praying doesn't hurt.

Originality and innovation have become your calling card. Why is that important to you?
Being the co-owner of a company means I have to think about the business side of game development. 5th Cell needed to build a name for itself. We needed our own calling card, as you call it. Since I handled the game concepts, 5th Cell's work and my work became synonymous.

Why has the DS been your system of choice in recent years? And what do you think has enabled you to unlock the system's potential?
Cost and risk, mostly. We could build DS games for a much smaller budget and do riskier things without freaking out publishers. I think people at our company really love what they do—that's how we unlocked the system's potential. After Drawn to Life we really started understanding the DS thanks to our excellent programming staff. Lock's Quest is pretty amazing technologically—you can

GAMEOGRAPHY

Before Slaczka made his mark on gaming with big-time successes such as Drawn to Life and Scribblenauts, he worked on a number of lesser-known titles for mobile phones.

G: 1700
HP: 1625
2

SIEGE
2004, CELL PHONE
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, LEAD DESIGNER, ORIGINAL CONCEPT CREATOR

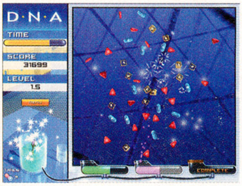
MINI POCCHA
2004, CELL PHONE
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, LEAD DESIGNER, ORIGINAL CONCEPT CREATOR

Red Cell
HP
Dawson
7
HP

SEAL TEAM 6
2004, CELL PHONE
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, LEAD DESIGNER, ORIGINAL CONCEPT CREATOR

ALPHA
G
100%
MENU

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR MOBILE
2005, CELL PHONE
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, LEAD DESIGNER



D.N.A.
2006, PC
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, LEAD DESIGNER, ORIGINAL CONCEPT CREATOR

Power Profiles

have these awesome battles with tons of stuff going on...and no slowdown. That's impressive! And, of course, Scribblenauts is just insane with how Marius Fahlbusch, our technical director, and his team did their magic to make it work at all.

Coming up with unique concepts can't be easy. How are you able to keep coming up with fresh ideas?
[Laughs] It's not easy at all. I'm a firm believer that anyone can have a good idea once in a while, but to consistently come up with great ideas is very difficult. I spend a lot of time on a lot of concepts before I'm happy with something. I'm wagering on millions of dollars, so I need to make sure this is the right type of game that will sell well and help 5th Cell's brand.

Do you see yourself moving over to Wii and exploring some new system-exclusive ideas that no one else has tapped into?
There are a few unique, original ideas for Wii that I've come up with that I absolutely love. They are totally unique. I'm not sure if we'll see them come to light though, which is kind of sad.

You mentioned in a previous interview that one of the things that influenced the creation of Scribblenauts was a dream you had. Have you had any other dreams that affected game development?
No, that's my first one! It was very strange to have a dream about a video game concept. I haven't had one since, either, but getting more to help me come up with new concepts would make my job a lot easier! I'd do a lot more napping.

Are there any ideas you've had that just ended up being too far out there to turn into a game?
I wouldn't say an idea has been too far out there to turn into a game, but sometimes they don't fit the scope of what our company can handle now. For every game we do I have 10 or 20 ideas we'll never get to do. And even more concepts that are just small ideas that won't see the light of day.

Given the various creative aspects of your DS games, is it safe to say you're a fan of user-generated content?
I wouldn't say I'm a fan of it. I actually don't seek out these types of games to play. I usually love the types of games that are the direct opposite of the stuff I make—very linear, polished, tried-and-true games like Half-Life 2 or Metal Gear Solid 4. I'm just a fan of unique ideas, and user-created content happens to have a wealth of ideas that haven't been explored yet because it's relatively new. I just want technology to keep expanding, which allows me to think of even more unique ways to give the player different experiences.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
I love the initial concept stage where the sky is the limit. It's so exciting to think of unique ideas and get people interested in them. Then, the day it's finished is so great, but the day you finish isn't the day it's out, so the wait between them is very difficult.

If you weren't making games, what do you think you'd be doing?
I'd be making movies for sure.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
I have a weird creative process. I do a lot of what I call subconscious stewing. Basically I'll just let an idea sit around in my head for hours, days, or even weeks, every so often just mulling it over as I watch TV or browse the web or do work on something else. I love to pace or doodle or let my mind wander before I really figure something out. It's half procrastination and half deep thought.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
I really respect Miyamoto. It may sound cheesy since this is Nintendo Power, but it's the truth. Most other designers get stuck in a genre or even sequels to the same titles their entire career. I could never do that. But Miyamoto has consistently reinvented the industry over the years. He's responsible for so many firsts. He's done more by himself to shape the industry than most studios would do in all their games combined.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I love Hayao Miyazaki's universes; my own work on Drawn to Life pulls a lot from his visual concepts. Also, because of my screenwriting background, I admire a lot of other writers and directors: Cameron Crowe, Charlie Kaufman, James Cameron, Steven Spielberg—all amazing talents in storytelling.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
I love snowboarding in the winter and racing my car in the summer; I recently got my track license, which was sweet. I think I just love speed.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
That's easy: a superpower that could absorb other people's superpowers. Is that cheating?

> *"It's so exciting to think of unique ideas and get people interested in them."*

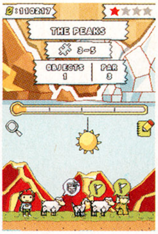
GAMEOGRAPHY

MOON GROVE
33
1440

DRAWN TO LIFE
2007, DS
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, LEAD DESIGNER, ORIGINAL CONCEPT CREATOR

SAND DUST BEACH
DAY 1
420
01:53

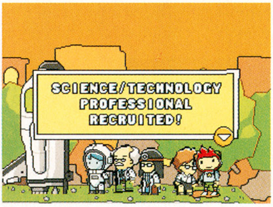
LOCK'S QUEST
2008, DS
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, LEAD DESIGNER, ORIGINAL CONCEPT CREATOR



SCRIBBLENAUTS
2009, DS
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, ORIGINAL CONCEPT CREATOR

SCRAMBLE TOWER
625
96

DRAWN TO LIFE: THE NEXT CHAPTER
2009, DS
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, ORIGINAL CONCEPT CREATOR



THE NEXT SCRIBBLENAUTS
2010, DS
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, ORIGINAL CONCEPT CREATOR

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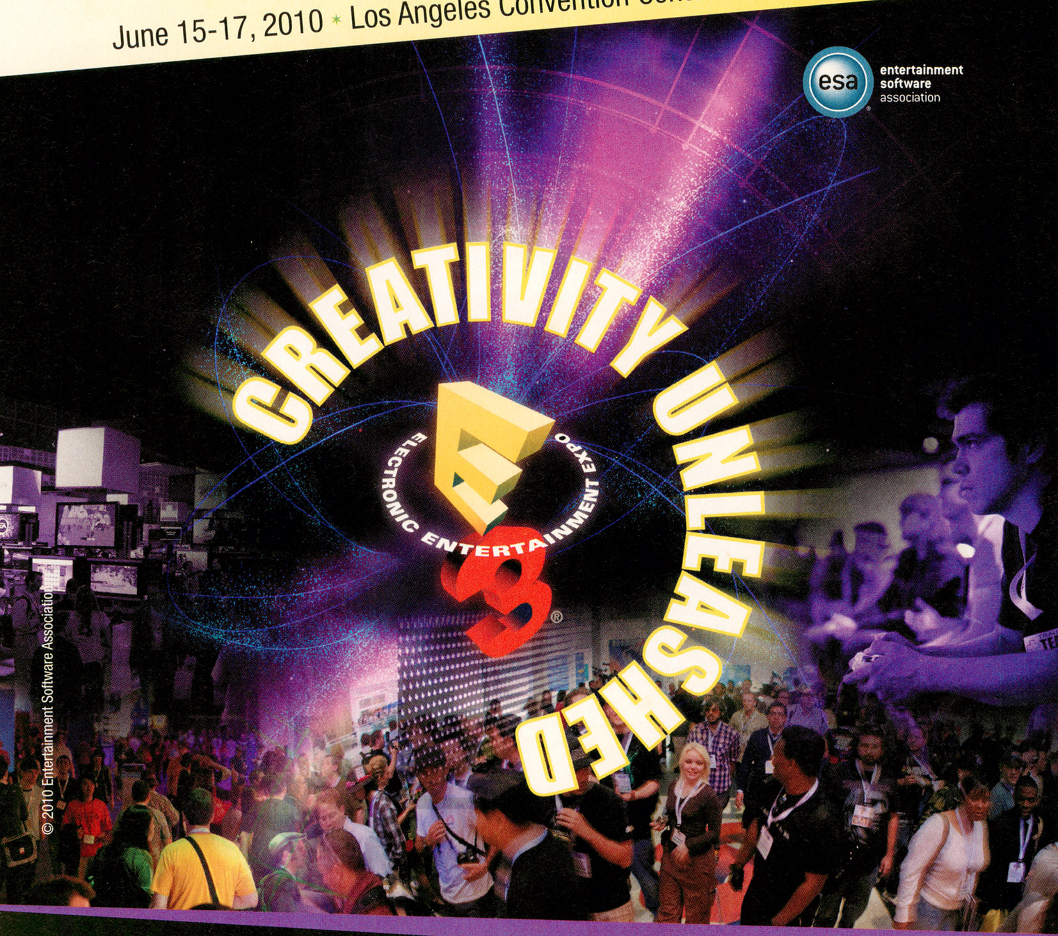

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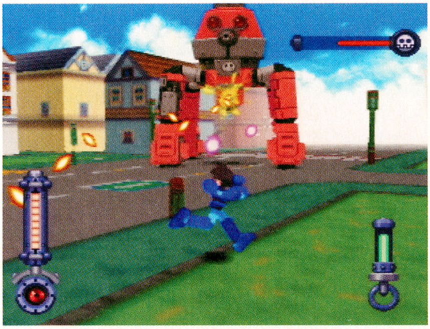
I think, therefore I pirate!

Mega Man 64

No mad scientists, but plenty of sky pirates.

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 64**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
RELEASE DATE: **FEBRUARY 2001**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **132, 133, 134, 139**
NUMBER OF SERVBOTS: **41**



Tron's mechanized death machines all sport the skull-shaped Bonne family mark. What is it with Mega Man villains and skull motifs?

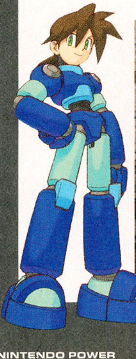
Believe it or not, in the year 2001, it had been five years since Mega Man had graced a Nintendo console (his last appearance had been in 1996's Mega Man X3 for the Super NES). After it was announced that he would be returning in a new game for the N64 system, you can imagine the surprise when it was revealed that the simply titled Mega Man 64 would not be a 2-D platformer, but a 3-D adventure game.

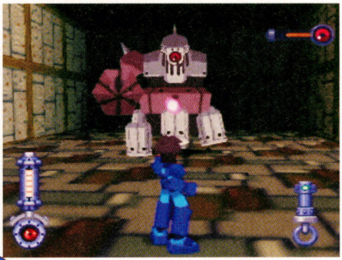
Despite not being a typical Mega Man game, Mega Man 64 still had plenty to enjoy, and it's an interesting "alternate universe" take on the character. Set in the far future on a flooded world, Mega Man—full name Mega Man Volnutt—is the adopted son of Barrell Casket, a respected treasure hunter. Along with Barrell's granddaughter, Roll, Mega Man and Barrell travel the world in their airship hunting for booty in the form of refractors—gems that act as both a currency and an energy source.

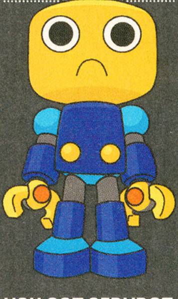
During their adventures, the group runs afoul of Tron Bonne, a crafty young lass and a member of a family of air pirates. Tron has a tendency to create trouble with her army of adorable, robotic Servbots, but she's frequently conflicted due to her crush on Mega Man. The Bonnes aren't the only threat in the game, however. Eventually, Mega Man faces an enemy that reveals some startling truths about our hero's past.

As interesting as the story is, the game can be a bit difficult to get into due to its awkward control scheme. Simply put, the controls aren't configured to take advantage of the N64's controller, making moving around in 3-D space a chore. The series's new direction also takes some getting used to, but once you accept it, exploring the labyrinthine catacombs and buying weapons upgrades is rewarding (although it *is* still weird seeing the Blue Bomber run around a large part of the game without his trademark helmet).

Gameplay quirks aside, Mega Man 64 is a rather enjoyable entry in the long-running franchise. The plot is interesting, and the characters are full of charm. Hopefully, Capcom will someday continue the adventures of Mega Man Volnutt and company. —**PHIL T.**

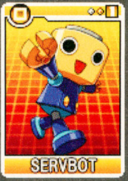






YOU GOT SERVBOT

Thanks to their chipper attitude, fierce loyalty to Tron Bonne, and adorable facial expressions, the lovable Servbots became the breakout stars of Mega Man 64. In addition to having their faces plastered on all sorts of merchandise in Japan, the little guys have gone on to make cameo appearances in other games.



They've popped up in the Mega Man Battle Network series and had special cards dedicated to them in SNK vs. Capcom: Card Fighters DS. Masks of their likenesses can be found in Dead Rising: Chop Till You Drop, and they appear a few times in Tatsunoko vs. Capcom. Frankly, the more we see of Tron's tiny minions, the happier we are.

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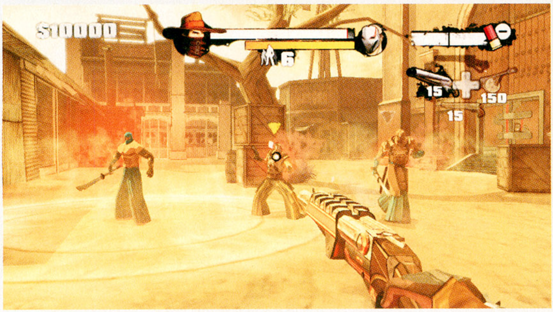
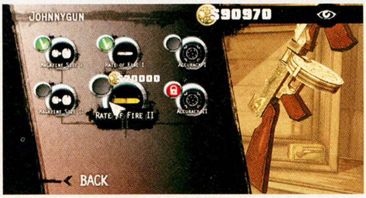
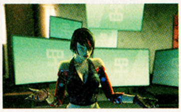
DS REVIEWS

BEAT CITY pg.85

Does Monster Hunter Tri slay the multiplayer-game competition? Turn to pg. 86 to find out!







A Cut Above

RED STEEL 2

RATING: 8.0

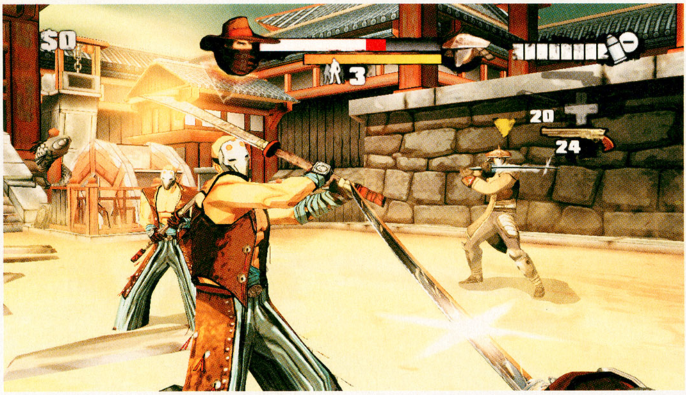
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT PARIS**
ESRB: **TEEN**

The original Red Steel was among the Wii console's most hyped launch titles, promising to showcase the system's innovative new controller with a mix of pointer-driven first-person shooting and motion-guided swordplay. Though a noble effort, the game ultimately fell well short of expectations. Now, with the help of the Wii MotionPlus accessory, Red Steel 2 finally delivers on the promise of its predecessor. What a difference a little peripheral can make.

Strictly speaking, the swordplay in this sequel still isn't 1:1, but that doesn't mean it's not immensely satisfying. The game does a very reliable job of reading the strength and direction of your swings, eliminating the frustration that's plagued similar efforts in the past. Better still, you'll continually learn new techniques, combos, and finishing moves throughout the adventure, lending the combat depth to match its visceral pleasures. Those advanced skills seem unnecessary early on, when most of your foes are relative pushovers. Progress a little further, though, and you'll find that simple hacking and slashing ceases to get the job done. You've also got an assortment of firearms, of course, and the ability to switch between them and your blade at any moment works flawlessly. That leads to some great Indiana Jones-type moments; when an enemy leaps at you with his sword, for instance, you can blast him out of midair with your shotgun. It's every bit as fun as it sounds. In addition, the controls are fully customizable (à la Sega's The Conduit), allowing you to tweak things like turn speed and the size of the bounding box precisely to your liking. And another benefit of Wii MotionPlus is that your cursor will continue moving smoothly even when you point the controller offscreen.

It's a good thing the core gameplay is so enjoyable, because Red Steel 2 can get a bit a repetitive. The majority of the 10-12-hour quest falls into a routine of skirmish-exploration-skirmish-exploration. There are a few attempts to mix things up—one level takes place aboard a speeding train and there's a quick-time event early on that's extremely well done—but the game could definitely use more stuff like that. Still, what's here is incredibly polished, and exploring this world is a joy thanks to the stunning aesthetics. This is easily one of the best-looking games on Wii, with a clean, vibrant cel-shaded style and impressively complex environments. There are times you'll wonder what Ubisoft Paris knows that other Wii developers don't. The Far East-meets-Old West theme gives the setting a refreshingly unique flavor, even if it can't help the story from falling flat.

If I have one other misgiving about Red Steel 2, it's the Teen rating. Don't get me wrong—I'm not looking for buckets of blood and gore. And as is, the game lets you pull off some surprisingly brutal finishing maneuvers. But there are times you can almost feel the developers holding back, which leads you to ponder how a game of this nature might have benefitted from allowing them to really go crazy. Nonetheless, it's a tradeoff I'm willing to accept if the friendlier rating helps this vastly improved sequel achieve the success it deserves. There's nothing else like it on Wii or any other platform, and I'm eager for more. —**STEVE T.**



WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT VIDEO GAME VILLAIN WOULD YOU SERVE UNDER AS A LACKEY?

JUSTIN CHENG

Sure, he'd probably betray me, but I want to work for Albert Wesker because I want his awesome abilities.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

I'd work under Dr. Wily to fulfill my longtime goal of becoming Hoff Man. Even if I got defeated, you know I'd get to return for the end-of-game teleport stage.

NATHAN MEUNIER

I'd take up the sword in Fawful's army any day. But only if he let me talk like him.

RANDY NELSON

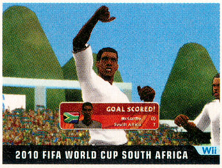
I'd love to be one of the demon henchmen to the final boss in Ghosts 'n Goblins. The game's so hard that Sir Arthur would probably never even reach my boss. Great job security!

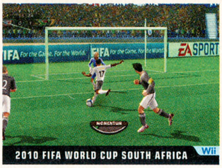
CHRIS SLATE

I'll bide my time as an assistant at Tom Nook's shop until I figure out how to steal the place out from under him.

STEVE THOMASON

I'll pledge my allegiance to Megatron (the cool one from War for Cyberton, not that lame Michael Bay travesty), then I'll team up with Starscream to overthrow him. It's the Decepticon way!



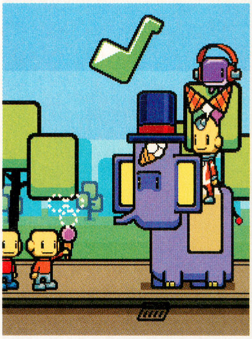


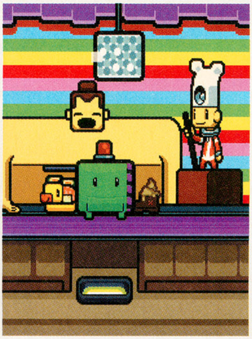
2010 FIFA WORLD CUP SOUTH AFRICA

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CANADA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Yes, the stylized cartoony visuals and the pick-up-and-play nature of EA's sports titles on Wii can be off-putting for die-hard fans. But for someone like me, who's always preferred more arcadey titles, this accessibility is a good thing. (I like the Momentum meter, for example, and shaking the remote when the ball glows in midair in order to gain control over the ball when it lands.) Besides, it's not like 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa is entirely for footie freshmen, as you can forgo the simplified gesture-based controls if you want. In addition to playing with the Wii Remote alone, you have the option of playing with a Classic Controller or with the Wii-Remote-and-Nunchuk combo. Both play styles work well, but as in FIFA 10, I prefer the latter since it allows you to direct your ball passes with the remote's pointer. This FIFA game also has good longevity thanks in part to my favorite mode, Zakumi's Dream Team, in which you assemble your ideal squad by recruiting new players from teams you've defeated. Still, only those with World Cup fever will want to check this one out; it's not terribly different from the relatively recent FIFA 10. —**JUSTIN C.**





Feel the Beat!

BEAT CITY

RATING: 8.5

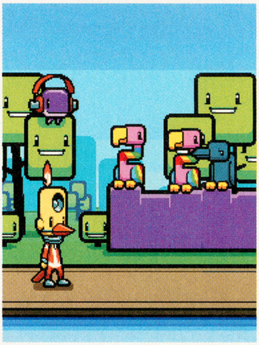
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **UNIVERSOMO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

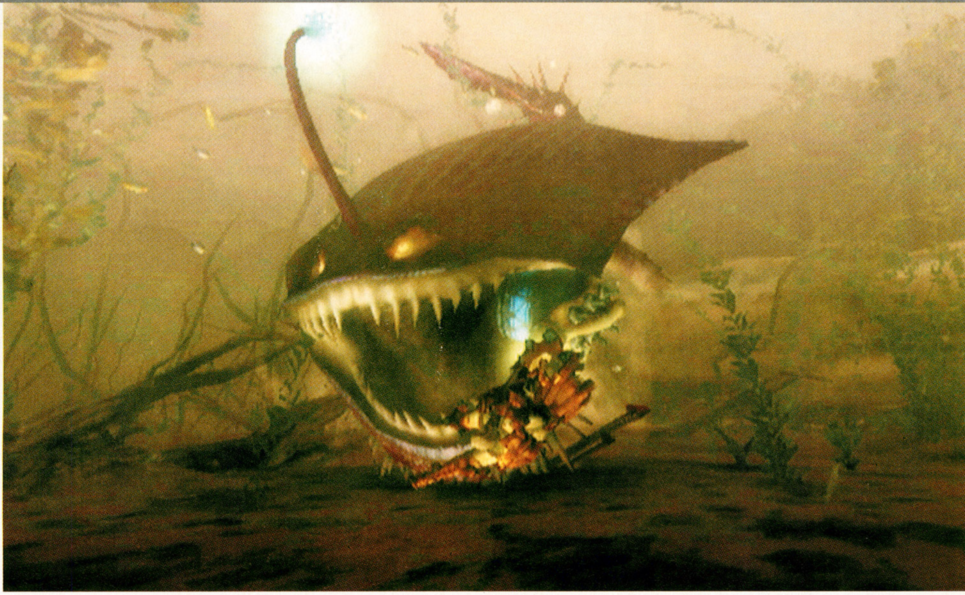
Music can certainly add some color to a dreary day, but Beat City really takes that idea to the next level. When the grimly adorned Dame Isolde Minor and her wicked Cacophony Corporation suck all the happiness out of town, you have to restore peace and order by bringing the groove back to the ailing citizens.

The musical-rhythm gameplay is similar to that of last year's Rhythm Heaven—you tap, swipe, and hold the stylus on the touch screen in time with the beat of the music and visual prompts—though Beat City has its own quirky style and a cohesive plot that ties together its funky minigames. A few of the game's most laughable activities include riding a purple elephant that shoots ice cream from its trunk to feed hungry kids, whispering poetry into your girlfriend's ear while her father is distracted by a giant gorilla that's whomping buildings, and giving wild haircuts to a parade of customers riding a conveyor belt.

When you perform well, each scene gradually transforms and blossoms with crazier colors and sillier character outfits. It's hard not to crack a smile at the exuberance that explodes on the screen, particularly when it all unfolds to an infectious beat. Instructions for each minigame are a little on the vague side, but you have a practice shot at each activity before the real deal. Overall, Beat City's delightful presentation and supercatchy chiptune soundtrack will get your toes tapping and your head banging in no time.

—**NATHAN M.**





Big Fun

MONSTER HUNTER TRI

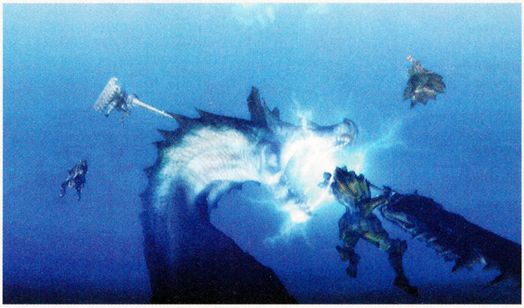
SCORE: 9.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
ESRB: **TEEN**

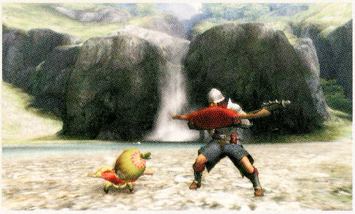
Capcom's Monster Hunter series is an absolute phenomenon in Japan, up there with the likes of Pokémon and Dragon Quest in terms of the devotion of its fans. Although it has RPG elements and you are trying to capture things, Monster Hunter Tri is really about the thrill of the hunt, thinking on your toes and—most of all—multiplayer camaraderie. It's a game Capcom chose to bring to Wii (it was originally being made for the PlayStation 3) due to the system's broad appeal, and we're very happy about it. It's gorgeous and fun, and there's nothing else like it for the system.

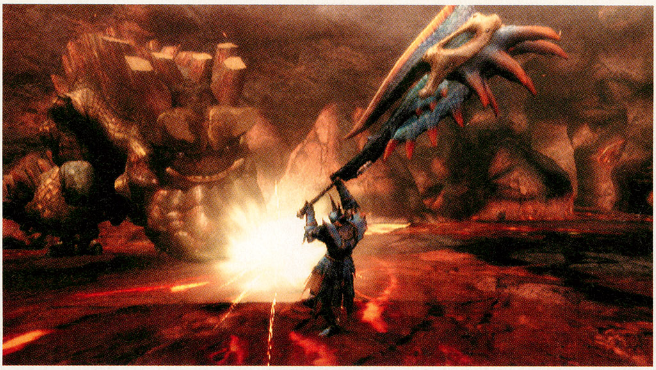
The game is set in a world where giant monsters (don't call them dinosaurs, no matter how much they look like 'em) roam free. Some of them are docile creatures subsisting on grass and plants, but they're outnumbered by the types that want to swallow you on sight—and these things range from several feet to several stories tall. Monster Hunter Tri is anything but a simple reworking of the past two Monster Hunter console games; it features an almost entirely new lineup of monsters, not to mention new goodies to use in taking them down.

Whether playing solo or online (more about the latter in a bit), the structure of the



[Below] Eat monster meat to regain stamina. Tasty!





The environments and enemies are varied and almost always impressive.

game is more or less the same. You design a character (we'd like to have seen a lot more appearance-altering options) and are dropped into the world as a complete newbie. Starting off in a small village, you have to earn the right to hunt large monsters by completing a series of smaller tasks first. These might be simple-sounding, such as collecting monster eggs or mushrooms, but you'll still have to deal with a fair number of deadly creatures to complete the timed quests.

It's important to have these early missions, though, as they show you the ropes and earn you zenny (the currency used in many of Capcom's classic titles) that can be used to upgrade the gear you'll need to take on the big guys.

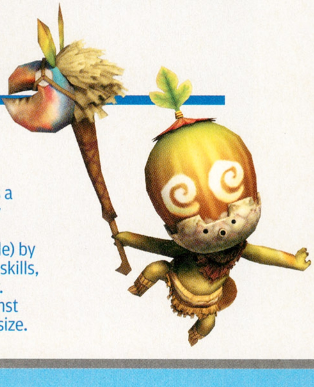
From the outset, there are all sorts of items to carry into battle—some of which are your typical healing potions and rations, and others of which are more exotic. There's a hollow capsule, for instance, that can hold a variety of different substances you want to trick monsters into eating. The inventory system is totally real-time, but works well—you need to hurry to choose an item while in combat, but you don't feel like you're getting killed because it's hard to choose what you want.

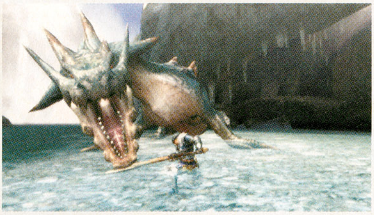
There's also a myriad of weapon and ammo types to choose from, and these have a big effect on how you play the game. There are several main types of weapons: Great Sword (a giant, two-handed sword); Sword and Shield; Hammer; Lance; Switch Axe (you can switch between the axe and a sword at any time); Long Sword; and the projectile weapon, the Bowgun. All of the melee weapons have a unique feel, and the Bowgun is an altogether different experience that's great for advanced players, since it relies on various combinations of barrels, frames and stocks, and ammunition (from pellets to poisoned rounds). Plus, you must combine recovered items to make the more-unusual rounds.

Along with the thrill of the hunt in Monster Hunter Tri comes the reward of finding items—some mainstays and some quite rare—and the various meats and other special loot that comes from carving up the monsters you've killed. This adds an extra degree of strategy to the game since the

NEVER HUNT ALONE

The single-player adventure in Monster Hunter Tri introduces a new companion character named ChaCha. This cute little guy accompanies you on your hunts, and he isn't around just for comic relief. You can change his personality (and dancing style) by making him wear different masks, and he can learn valuable skills, including those that heal you and increase your attack power. Through leveling up, ChaCha can even cast attack spells against the monsters you're hunting. Don't judge this sidekick by his size.





Water is no problem for these monster hunters.

monsters vanish if you're not fast enough, but you can be interrupted by other attacking monsters while carving. You also have to maintain the sharpness of your edged weapons by sharpening them in the field using whetstones.

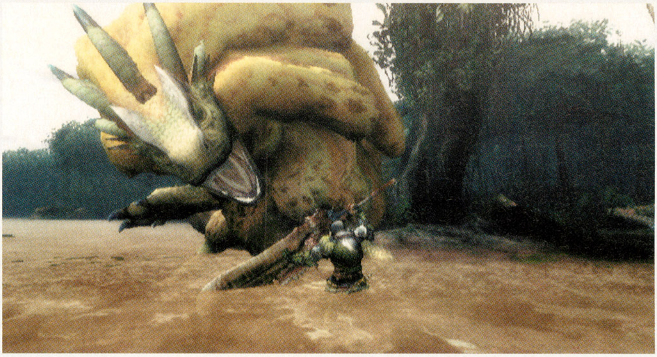
So those are some of the basics. In action, the game really is a grand adventure. It's not about story really, or even dialog; it's about running (often sneaking) through lush environments in the pursuit of really dangerous game. You'll go from caverns to wide-open fields to—for the first time in the series—underwater locations to track down your targets.

The controls feel great, and although it's possible to play using a Wii Remote and Nunchuk (swinging the remote to attack), we really recommend either the Classic Controller or the new Classic Controller Pro. How fast and agile you are depends on both the armor you're wearing and the weapon you're carrying, so you should take care in choosing the right gear to suit your style of play. Things like sprinting, blocking, and dodging are simple to pull off, and the basic attack controls only require you to be roughly facing the monster you're attacking. It all just works.

On top of that, Monster Hunter Tri is a really pretty game—easily one of the best-looking we've ever seen on Wii. The world is lush and teeming with activity, the monster designs are creative, and the way the creatures move (especially the larger ones) is awesome; the attention to detail and the amount of animation on them really makes you say, "wow."

As solid as the game is for the solo player, once you play Monster Hunter Tri online with others, you realize it's what the designers intended all along. Coordinating with three other hunters to take down mammoth monsters is incredibly fun, and it's an

[Below] Blocking is smart, but dodging may be smarter in this case.



experience that's without equal on Wii. Thankfully, the North American release of the game has seen a number of improvements, one of the most important being support for the Wii Speak microphone peripheral during online play. With the original Japanese version, all communication with fellow hunters was handled via emoticons, text macros, and a keyboard. Nothing beats setting up a plan of attack using real-time voice chat.

Multiplayer hunts involving the largest monsters are truly epic, seeing you and your party chasing a beast across the entire area map (the world maps are divided into subareas, with quick loads in between) until you eventually corner it and put your plan into action. A Bowgun-wielding character might hang back and fire rounds into the beast to slow it while another character runs in to plant a trap that'll keep the brute from escaping to another part of the map—the two other players can then (carefully) move in and start attacking. Or players can place explosives, use one of the squad members as bait to make the creature charge them, then have the bait jump clear at the last moment as a Bowgun shot ignites the explosives and deals major damage to the monster.

The battles against the great beasts are lengthy yet extremely rewarding—not just by way of the loot you'll get and the bounty you'll earn, but in the satisfaction that comes from working together as a team. Few games make you want to high-five your TV screen, but this one might (so be careful).

Monster Hunter Tri is one of the very best games Wii has to offer. We can recommend it without the slightest bit of hesitation. Sign in, suit up, and grab some friends—the Wii's multiplayer "killer app" is here.

—RANDY N.

HUNTING STYLES

Monster Hunter Tri offers a wide range of weapons to master, letting you find the play style that best suits you. Here's what you have to choose from.

Great Sword
This huge, two-handed blade deals multiple hits with a single swing, but due to its size, is the slowest of the bladed weapons you can wield. When blocking, the sword itself acts as your shield.

Sword and Shield
This is the most familiar setup for action-adventure players. Attacks are fast, but will never be as lethal as with some of the other blade types.

Bowgun
This customizable weapon can fire a wide variety of ammunition, some of it devastating, some of it great for slowing down monsters so that the other hunters can land more hits.

Lance
This weapon requires more precision than the others, but a single well-placed stab from it can deliver a lot of damage.

Switch Axe
This weapon lets you switch between an axe and a standard sword, which is good for situations where you're taking on fast and slow monsters simultaneously.

Long Sword
Another two-handed blade, this one deals less damage than the Great Sword but benefits from having greater reach, which enables you to attack while leaving more room to maneuver.

Hammer
Like the Great Sword, the Hammer is slow but delivers a lot of damage. It can send small monsters flying on impact.

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Academy of Champions: Soccer	6.5	Ubisoft	248	E
Astro Boy: The Video Game	7.5	D3Publisher	248	E10+
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	T
The Beatles: Rock Band	9.0	MTV Games	247	T
The Bigs 2	6.0	2K Sports	244	E10+
Boom Blox Bash Party	8.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
A Boy and His Blob	8.5	Majesco	247	E
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars—The Director's Cut	7.0	Ubisoft	241	T
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Reflex	9.0	Activision	249	M
Calling	5.0	Hudson	253	T
The Conduit	8.0	Sega	243	T
Cursed Mountain	7.0	Deep Silver	246	M
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party 3	6.5	Konami	248	E10+
Data East Arcade Classics	6.5	Majesco	252	T
Dead Space Extraction	8.0	Electronic Arts	247	M
Destiny of Zorro	2.5	505	243	E10+
DiRT 2	4.5	Codemasters	247	E10+
DJ Hero	8.5	Activision	249	T
Don King Boxing	5.5	2K Sports	241	T
Dragon Ball: Revenge of King Piccolo	6.5	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	7.0	THQ	248	E
Endless Ocean: Blue World	7.5	Nintendo	252	E10+
Excitebots: Trick Racing	8.0	Nintendo	241	E
Family Fun Football	4.5	Tecmo	247	E
FIFA Soccer 10	6.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	8.0	Square Enix	250	T
Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon	5.5	XSEED	253	T
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	7.5	Atari	243	E10+
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	5.0	Electronic Arts	246	T
Grand Slam Tennis	7.5	Electronic Arts	243	E
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core Plus	7.5	Aksys	241	T
Guitar Hero 5	8.0	Activision	247	T
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	5.5	Electronic Arts	244	E10+
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade	7.5	Natsume	248	E
Help Wanted	4.5	Hudson	242	E10+
Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings	7.5	LucasArts	243	T
Jambo! Safari	3.5	Sega	250	E
Ju-On: The Grudge	6.0	XSEED	247	M
Karaoke Revolution	6.0	Konami	248	T
Klonoa	9.0	Namco Bandai	241	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	6.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
LEGO Rock Band	8.0	Warner Bros.	249	E10+
Let's Tap	7.0	Sega	243	E
Little King's Story	9.0	XSEED	244	T
Madden NFL 10	8.0	Electronic Arts	245	E
Major League Baseball 2K10	7.0	2K Sports	253	E
Major Minor's Majestic March	6.0	Majesco	241	E
Marble Saga: Kororinpa	7.5	Hudson	240	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	7.0	Sega	247	E
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	5.5	Activision	248	T
Mini Ninjas	7.5	Eidos	247	E10+
MotoGP	4.0	Capcom	240	E
The Munchables	7.0	Namco Bandai	243	E
Muramasa: The Demon Blade	8.0	Ignition	246	T
MySims Agents	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
MySims Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
Naruto Shippuden: Clash of Ninja Revolution 3	7.5	Tomy	249	T
NBA 2K10	6.0	2K Sports	247	E
Need for Speed Nitro	7.0	Electronic Arts	249	E10+
New Super Mario Bros. Wii	9.0	Nintendo	249	E
NHL 2K10	8.0	2K Sports	246	E10+
No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle	9.0	Ubisoft	252	M
Onechanbara: Bikini Zombie Slayers	6.5	D3Publisher	240	M
Overlord: Dark Legend	7.0	Codemasters	244	T
Phantom Brave: We Meet Again	8.0	NIS America	243	T
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Gottlieb Collection	6.5	Crave	251	E
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010	8.0	Konami	250	E
Punch-Out!!	8.5	Nintendo	242	E10+
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E10+
Racquet Sports	6.5	Ubisoft	253	E
Ready 2 Rumble Revolution	5.0	Atari	240	T
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	249	M
Rune Factory Frontier	7.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	7.5	NIS America	253	T
Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Shiren the Wanderer	6.5	Atlus	252	T
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	8.0	Konami	249	M
SimAnimals Africa	5.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces	7.0	XSEED	250	T
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	8.0	Sega	252	E
Spectrobes: Origins	5.5	Disney	246	E10+
Spore Hero	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E10+
Spyborgs	7.5	Capcom	247	T
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	5.0	LucasArts	249	T
Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll	5.5	Sega	252	E
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars	9.0	Capcom	251	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash-Up	7.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	9.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
Tornado Outbreak	6.5	Konami	247	E10+
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	5.5	Activision	245	T
Up	6.5	THQ	242	E
Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga	4.0	XSEED	246	T

MORE ON:

SHIREN THE WANDERER

I don't usually play Mystery Dungeon-type games, but I was interested in Shiren the Wanderer because publisher Atlus said that this Wii title was supposed to be newbie-friendly. They were right. And this accessibility made my rare dungeon-crawling experience an enjoyable one. —JUSTIN C.

HP 197/ 234
LV23

Asuka hit Flame Daruma for 61 damage.

MORE ON:

SONIC & SEGA ALL-STARS RACING

For old-school Sega fans like myself, this high-speed fusion of the company's classic franchises is a welcome race down memory lane. Jet Set Radio, Space Channel 5, Shenmue, and even the underrated Billy Hatcher are represented. I only wish the dragon from Panzer Dragoon had been included as a playable racer. —STEVE T.

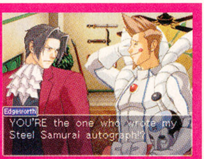
Virtua Tennis 2009	7.0	Sega	244	E
Wii Sports Resort	8.5	Nintendo	245	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.5	THQ	248	T
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	5.0	Activision	243	T

Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth	8.0	Capcom	252	T
Again	7.0	Tecmo Koei	253	T
Ant Nation	2.0	Konami	245	E
Assassin's Creed II: Discovery	7.0	Ubisoft	250	T
Atelier Annie: Alchemists of Sera Island	8.0	NIS America	248	E10+
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	E10+
Bejeweled Twist	8.5	PopCap	251	E
Black Sigil: Blade of the Exiled	5.0	Graffiti	242	E
Bleach: The 3rd Phantom	4.0	Sega	246	T
Bookworm DS	8.5	PopCap	249	E
Cooking Mama 3: Shop & Chop	6.0	Majesco	248	E
C.O.P. The Recruit	4.0	Ubisoft	249	T
C.O.R.E.	5.5	Graffiti	242	M
Crime Scene	5.0	SouthPeak	253	M
The Dark Spire	5.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Dawn of Discovery	8.5	Ubisoft	244	E
Dawn of Heroes	7.5	Majesco	253	E10+
Deca Sports DS	5.5	Hudson	253	E
Dokapon Journey	4.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Dragon Ball Z: Attack of the Saiyans	8.0	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	8.0	THQ	248	E
Fighting Fantasy: The Warlock of Firetop Mountain	4.0	Aspyr	248	T
Fossil Fighters	8.0	Nintendo	246	E
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	5.0	Electronic Arts	245	E10+
Glory of Heracles	7.0	Nintendo	251	E10+
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	9.0	Rockstar	241	M
Guitar Hero On Tour: Modern Hits	7.0	Activision	244	E10+
Harvest Moon: Frantic Farming	8.0	Natsume	243	E
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands	7.0	Natsume	248	E
Hero's Saga: Laevatein Tactics	7.0	Aksys	247	T
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey	4.0	505	246	E10+
Infinite Space	8.0	Sega	253	T
Jake Hunter Detective Story: Memories of the Past	6.0	Aksys	242	T
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	9.0	Square Enix	247	E10+
Knights in the Nightmare	8.0	Atlus	243	T
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks	9.5	Nintendo	250	E10+
The Legendary Starfy	7.0	Nintendo	243	E
LEGO Battles	5.0	Warner Bros.	243	E
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	5.0	LucasArts	249	E10+
Magician's Quest: Mysterious Times	7.5	Konami	242	E10+
Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story	9.5	Nintendo	246	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	8.0	Sega	247	E
Mega Man Star Force 3: Red Joker/Black Ace	6.0	Capcom	244	E
Miami Law	3.0	Hudson	243	T
Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes	8.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Mini Ninjas	6.0	Eidos	247	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Council 4	5.0	Tomy	243	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Destiny 2	7.0	Tomy	247	T
Nostalgia	7.0	Ignition	248	E10+
Overlord Minions	7.0	Codemasters	244	E10+
Phantasy Star 0	8.0	Sega	248	E10+
Pokémon HeartGold Version	9.5	Nintendo	253	E
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky	8.0	Nintendo	248	E
Pokémon Platinum Version	9.0	Nintendo	241	E
Pokémon SoulSilver Version	9.5	Nintendo	253	E
Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box	8.0	Nintendo	246	E10+
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Ragnarok DS	5.0	XSEED	252	E10+
Rhythm Heaven	9.0	Nintendo	241	E
Roogoo Attack	4.0	SouthPeak	243	E
Rooms: The Main Building	7.0	Hudson	253	E
Sands of Destruction	7.0	Sega	250	T
Scribblenauts	9.0	Warner Bros.	247	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor	8.0	Atlus	244	T
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey	8.0	Atlus	253	M
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	6.0	Sega	252	E
Sonic Classic Collection	7.0	Sega	253	E
Space Bust-A-Move	7.0	Taito	245	E
Space Invaders Extreme 2	8.0	Square Enix	248	E
Spore Hero Arena	5.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
Squishy Tank	8.0	Natsume	253	E
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	5.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
Steal Princess	6.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Super Robot Taisen OG Saga: Endless Frontier	7.0	Atlus	241	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Arcade Attack	4.5	Ubisoft	248	E10+
Touch Mechanic	5.0	Aspyr	241	E
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	7.0	Activision	245	E10+
WarioWare D.I.Y.	8.5	Nintendo	253	E
WireWay	6.5	Konami	249	E
A Witch's Tale	4.0	NIS America	247	E10+
The Wizard of Oz: Beyond the Yellow Brick Road	6.5	XSEED	246	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.0	THQ	248	T

MORE ON:

ACE ATTORNEY INVESTIGATIONS: MILES EDGEWORTH



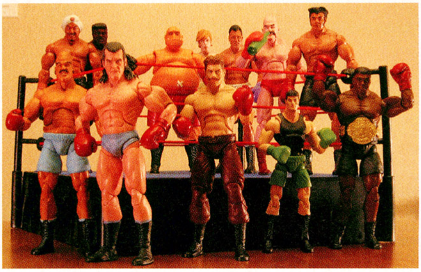
I enjoyed Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth from beginning to end, but the game really hits its stride in the lengthy final case. The last case just seems to have an extra layer of polish; all the characters' personalities shine, and the dialogue is written to perfection. Nods to past relationships and previous Ace Attorney games are an added bonus that should especially delight series fans. —CHRIS H.

MORE ON:

SONIC & SEGA ALL-STARS RACING

The DS version of Sega's kart racer is feature-packed and fairly fun—on easy mode. Starting at normal difficulty, I found the other racers' attacks too cheap, even for a kart game. —CHRIS S.

COMMUNITY



FANDOM

Plastic Pugilists

Classic 8-bit combatants come to life as custom action figures.

WE LOVE IT when our readers show the dedication and do-it-yourself ingenuity to create something that wouldn't be made through official channels, so we couldn't help but grin when we saw these amazing homemade sets of action figures based on NES classics Punch-Out!! and Pro Wrestling.

Lovingly crafted by 33-year-old Rick Dries of Cherry Hill, New Jersey, each set features the iconic characters from the two ring-based fighters, including King Hippo and Glass Joe from Punch-Out!! and The Amazon and Giant Panther from Pro Wrestling. Dries says that although initially he was inspired by last year's Punch-Out!! revival on the Wii console, the greater impetus was to bring a bit more fan attention to these 8-bit favorites.

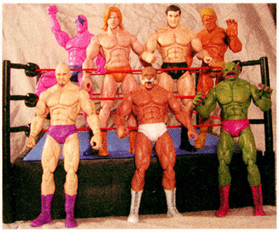
"Neither game had received the marketing love like the Zelda and Mario franchises did, so I decided to do something about it," explains Dries. "Another reason for making the Pro Wrestling figures was to hopefully stir up enough buzz [within] the gaming community to inspire a Pro Wrestling sequel for Wii."

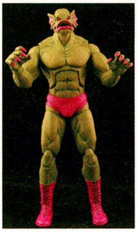
According to Dries, each of his custom figures can take a week or more to assemble, based on the complexity of each character. Though primarily composed of various pieces of other figures he's acquired over the years, many of the details are custom-made using epoxy sculpting clay and paint, plus whatever else he can find. For example, while King Hippo's body and gloves come from WWE and *Rocky* action figures, respectively, his two swappable heads were hand-sculpted, and his crown comes from a glue container.

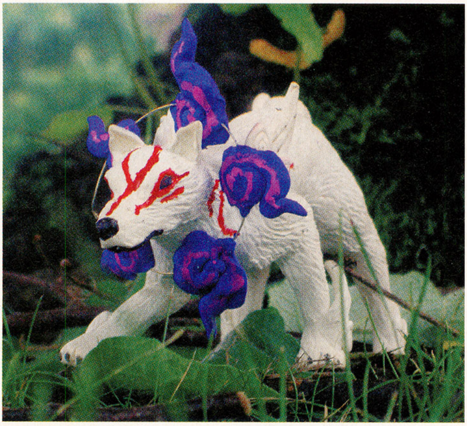
"I did buy quite a few figures to use as the base bodies, but I also have a big box full of miscellaneous parts," he says. "Customizing is a free-for-all; whatever I can find that will work is what I use."

Dries says he's been customizing action figures as a hobby for about four years now, and is currently working on a set of Donkey Kong figures. After that, he's considering making an action figure of the original "blue pig" Ganon from The Legend of Zelda on NES, but says he has numerous ideas in mind. "I'll keep making them until I complete all the characters I want or find something else that piques my interest," he says.

As for the Punch-Out!! and Pro Wrestling figures, Dries tells us he'd like to hold on to them, but that the need to continue his expensive hobby may necessitate parting with the excellent creations. "I always create with the intention to keep them, but when I start running out of space, I usually sell them to buy more parts to create more customs," he admits. "It's a vicious cycle." —**ANDREW H.**







FANDOM/COSPLAY

Homemade Heroes

How Zelda and Okami inspire one fan's artwork and crafts.

LICENSED STATUES OF popular video game characters can sell for big bucks, but Leah Colagiacomo avoids such expense with a unique approach: by making her own! Colagiacomo, a 22-year-old art student from Jamestown, New York, sent us images of some of her homemade clay sculptures, which include Amaterasu from Okami, Wolf Link from The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess, and a Buffamoo from Rune Factory.

Using official artwork as a reference, Colagiacomo begins with an aluminum skeleton, which she then covers with oven-bake polymer clay that she sculpts to her liking. Once properly shaped, the sculpture is placed in the oven and baked to completion, then finished off with acrylic paint when cooled. "I usually try very hard to be accurate to the game character I am making, though often I add my own style to it," she says.

Colagiacomo also likes to draw and paint, re-creating her favorite video game characters and fantasy-inspired animals and beasts with pastels and paint, or in Adobe Photoshop. She also created a cosplay costume of Link—what she describes as "a very elaborate Halloween costume"—which she modeled while Zelda tunes played from a small speaker connected to an iPod in her pocket.

Asked what compels her to create artwork and crafts based on Okami and the Zelda series, Colagiacomo credits each franchise's "sense of epic adventure." She continues, "Few other games I've played have drawn me so deeply into the story and action. I feel all the emotions of the game: the awe, the fear, the sadness, and the joy. No other games that I can think of have made me care so much about the characters and the world they live in." —**ANDREW H.**

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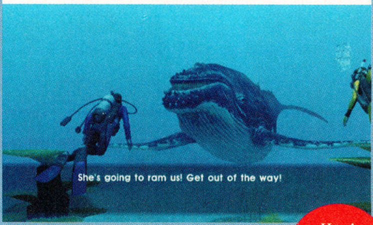
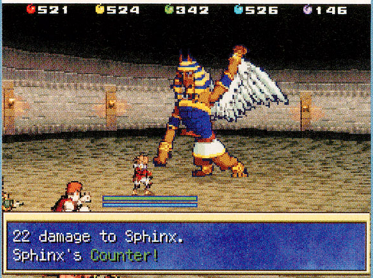


She's going to ram us! Get out of the way!

But her smile tells me she just wants to give us a hug!

Here's our caption.
THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 252'S SHOT



22 damage to Sphinx.
Sphinx's Counter!

"In his enthusiasm to answer the unasked question, the Sphinx appeared to have dislocated his shoulder." —**ALEX B.**

"Sphinx counters with Filibuster! The party falls asleep!" —**AJ**

"The Sphinx might not realize this, but deodorant is *not* a myth." —**ALEX L.**

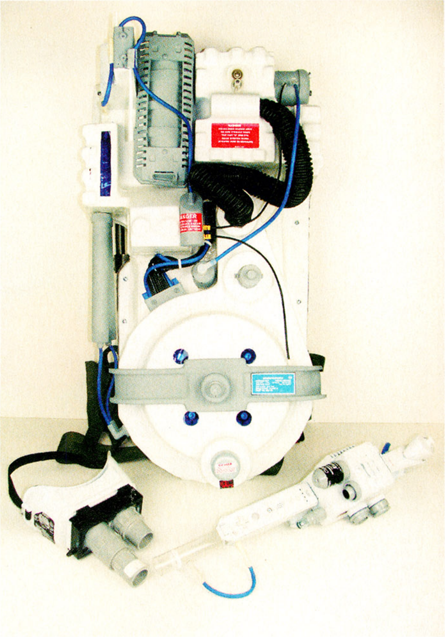
"In a hilarious twist of fate, The 'Sphinx's Counter' is useless because the Sphinx lost his counter in a yard sale last week." —**JACOB A.**

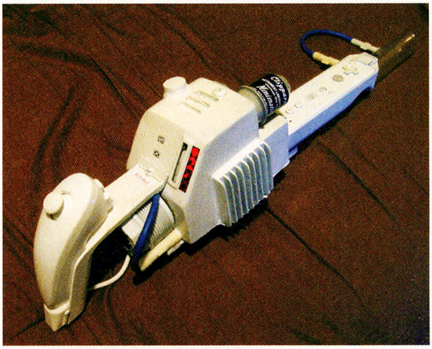
"Either he's about to crush me, or he wants a high five. I *really* hope he wants a high five...." —**TERMINATORBOY**

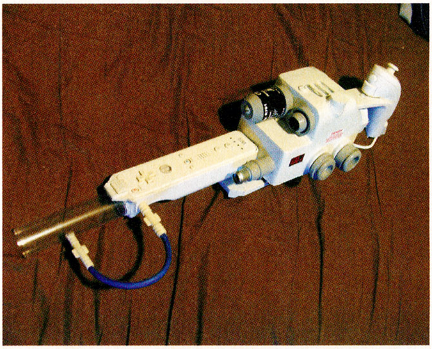
"Not funny—my bracelet got caught on my wing again." —**GRAYSON A.**

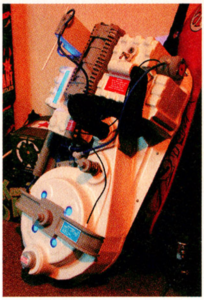
ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!









[Above] A great combination of form and function. [Left] Check out the details on that proton pack!

Boos Beware

This fan-made Ghostbusters proton pack Wii peripheral is spooky-awesome.

EVER SINCE HE was a young kid, Jack Rossi wanted to know what it would feel like to be a Ghostbuster. At the age of six he built his first proton pack out of a macaroni-and-cheese box. His next prototype was made out of a Quaker Oats box combined with a rolled-up supermarket flyer as the proton thrower. Now 26, the Los Angeles-based professional toy designer has taken his obsession to the next level by custom-crafting the ultimate ghostbusting Wii peripheral—an insanely lifelike proton-pack-and-thrower combo.

Rossi's lifelong fascination with toys and how they're made spurred him to seek a career in toy design. He's now a manager at the agency that designs all of the kids'-meal toys for Burger King, and he finds being able to create toys for a living extremely rewarding and fun. However, he also loves to tinker at home. The arrival of Ghostbusters: The Video Game on Wii presented a unique opportunity to combine his various passions into a single project.

"Making the pack was a huge challenge for me because it's all in the details," Rossi explains. "I started prototyping the proton thrower the day the game was released. It took about nine months to figure out how to house all the components that I would need to play the game, as well as a design that functioned correctly and was ergonomic. I used all the junk around my house to make the pack."

Starting with a fan-created shell as a base for the pack, he customized its exterior with items he was able to scavenge. He selected a white finish to match the Wii console's design, though every other element for the pack was chosen to look as close as possible to the ones in the original *Ghostbusters* film.

The thrower design required the most care, since it houses the Wii Remote and Nunchuk and still has to be functional. Rossi says the biggest challenge was precisely positioning the clear tube on the front of the thrower to make it look accurate without obstructing the Wii Remote sensor. But when everything was finished, it really amplified the spectral butt-kicking experience.

Rossi plays the game in style, with the visuals piped through a large projector onto his wall. "Red Fly Studio has done an excellent job of capturing the essence of the franchise," he says, "and when you wear the pack you feel like the new recruit out to catch ghosts." —**NATHAN M.**

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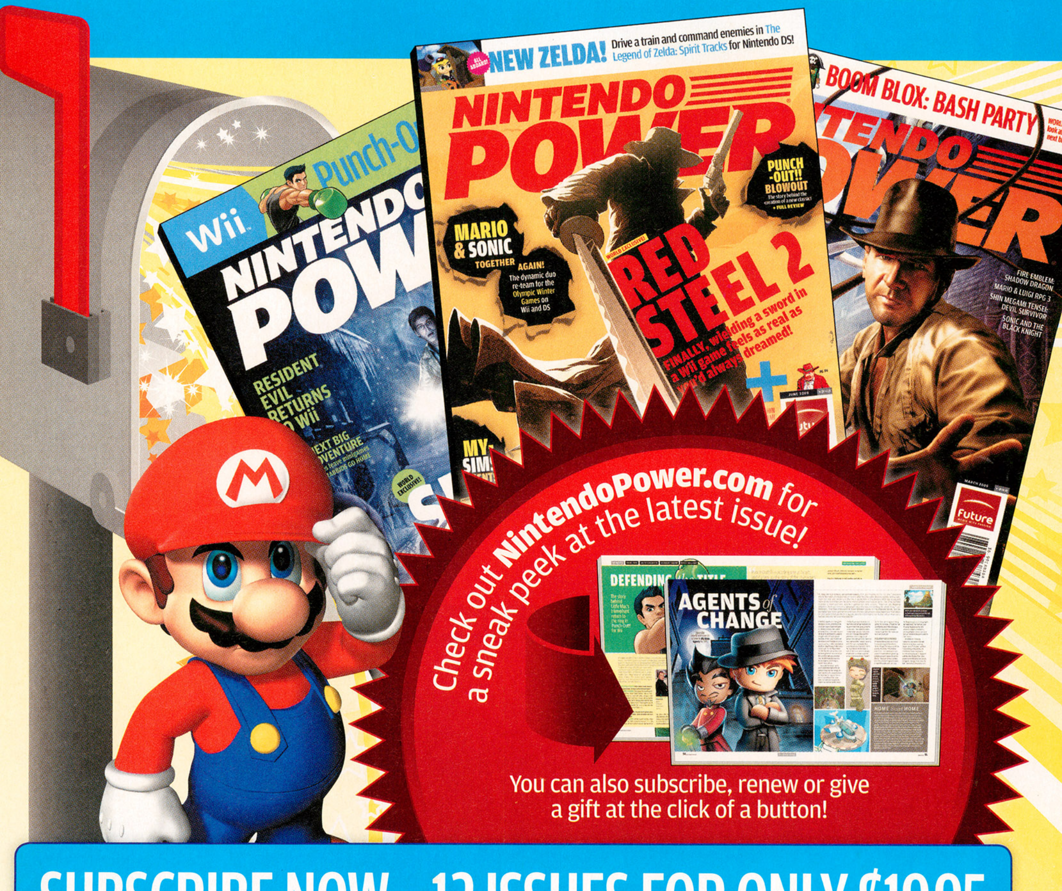
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NEXT MONTH

JUNE 2010 · VOL. 255

In just 30 short days we'll finally blast our way into Sin and Punishment: Star Successor with Wii Remotes blazing. Check back to find out why every action fan should be gunning for this game.

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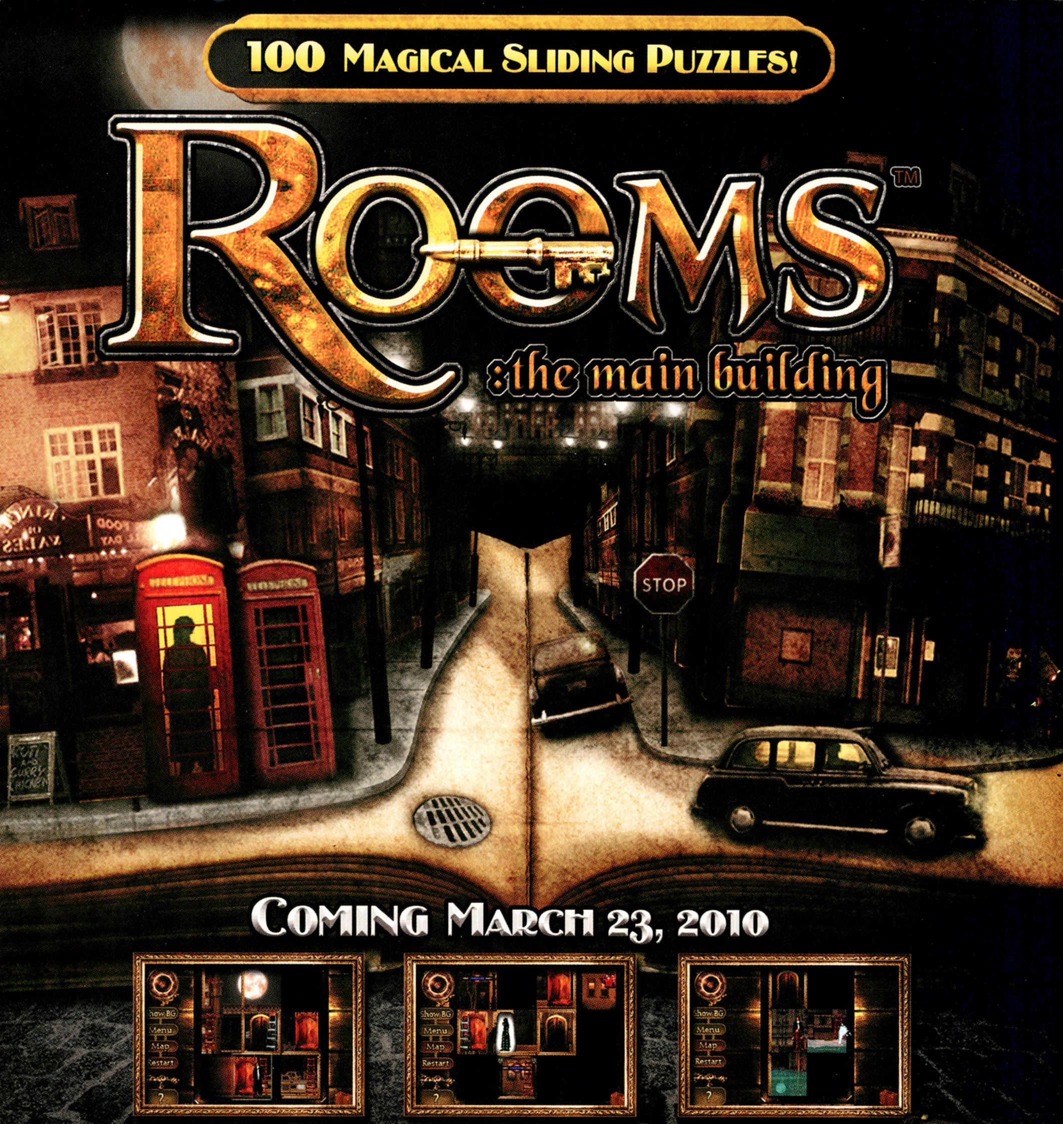

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